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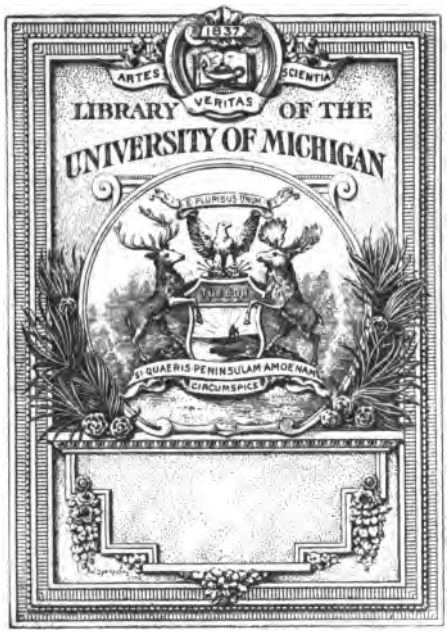
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THE

WORKS

OF

HENRY WARE, JR., D.D.

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SKETCH

OF THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE

REV. JOHN E. ABBOT.

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REV. JOHN E. ABBOT.

THERE are some men whose characters belong to the public. They whom Providence has placed in a conspicuous station, and who adorn that station with eminent virtues, may improve mankind by their example, and therefore their example belongs to mankind. Their history and character may do good, when they are no more, and should not be hidden. Although, therefore, we are no advocates for indiscriminate biography, and for laying open the private retirements of all good men, yet we conceive that there are cases of unquestionable propriety, and even duty, when the example of those who have left us should be fully set forth, that men may see it, and be led to glorify our Father who is in heaven. There are few things which more affect, encourage, and animate the living, than to know how they endured and what they accomplished, who have gone before them in the path of glory.

We are unwilling, therefore, to suffer the late Rev. J. E. Abbot to sleep with his fathers, without endeavoring to perpetuate the remembrance of what he was, and exhibiting his character to the imitation of Christians. To those who know him, no description or eulogium can adequately

portray the image which remains upon their memories. There are traits which cannot be presented in language. We can attempt no more than to give the leading incidents of his short life, and so to display the beauty of his religious character, as to promote the cause of truth and piety.

John Emery Abbot was born in Exeter, N. H., on the 6th of August, 1793. He seems to have been destined to the ministry from his very birth. His mother, whom he is said to have greatly resembled, and who lived but a few months after his birth, solemnly dedicated him to God before her death. The knowledge of this circumstance made an impression on his mind, and he seems never to have lost sight of his destination. His religious character commenced early; he probably never knew the time when he was destitute of religious impressions. The same amiableness of disposition and gentleness of demeanor marked his childhood, which characterized him when a man, and made him then, as he was always, an object of more than ordinary interest to those who knew him. "While in the Academy," says one of his schoolmates, "no one regarded him as capable of doing wrong. We looked on him as a purer being than those around him."

He completed his classical education at Bowdoin College, in Brunswick, Maine, and was graduated with reputation, in 1810, at the early age of seventeen. His college life appears to have been of a piece with his whole existence — unassuming and exemplary. At times, however, his diffidence and self-distrust oppressed him with the idea that he should disappoint the wishes of his friends, and become a useless being. He has since told a friend, that so great, at one period, was his despondency, that he would willingly have exchanged all his future hopes and prospects for the certainty of a living as a schoolmaster in some remote

village; the office of a clergyman, although, from his earliest recollection, the object of his most ardent desires, appearing to him a situation of too much dignity for him to aspire to.

After leaving college, he soon commenced his preparation for the holy work to which his heart was always devoted, and pursued his theological studies partly at the university in Cambridge, and partly under the direction of the Rev. William E. Channing, in Boston. This term of preparatory discipline he passed with great diligence and fidelity. Religious truth was dear to his mind, and he entered with interest into those inquiries which are necessary to ascertain and define it, and without which the mind of a theologian is unfurnished. But there was one part of the ministerial preparation to which he attached supreme importance, and to which, consequently, his principal attention was directed. He thought the *religious character* of infinitely greater moment than all other qualifications of talents or acquirements. He had an extraordinary reverence for the sacred office, and dreaded above all things a diminution of that personal interest in religion, which alone can fit one for it, or make him useful in it. He believed that the knowledge of human nature, and of the modes of addressing and moving the conscience, which might be gained from the habitual study and discipline of his own heart, would be far more important to himself, and to his flock, than laborious researches into some subjects connected with theology, which might make him more learned, but would be in danger of making him cold. And therefore, upon the principle that the affections are worth every thing to a religious man, and especially to a minister, it was his favorite aim and object to keep them alive. His wish was to be a good and useful, and never to be a great man. To this single object he bent his fine powers, and girded himself,

like his Master, *to go about doing good.* There was no selfish ambition in any of his plans; they all centred in the supreme desire to become a good minister. How much he had this at heart, and what his favorite views of the profession were, may be seen from the following extract of a letter, written just before he began to preach.

"How soon I shall be presented for approval, I know not exactly. As I draw nearer the close of my course, I feel a greater importance to be thrown into the little time which remains before its termination. And the more I reflect, the more solemn appears the office of a shepherd of the Christian flock. To enlighten the ignorant with truth, to guide the wandering and the doubting, to give hope to the penitent and consolation to the sorrowing, and to arouse the sleep of the sinner, is indeed a blessed, but a most responsible office; and it seems the more solemn when we think that it is committed to '*earthen vessels*,' who themselves are ignorant and wandering, surrounded with temptations, darkened by error, and polluted with sin. It is a most animating thought, that He who promised to his apostles, 'Lo, I am ever with you,' forsakes not their feeble successors."

His sentiments and feelings in regard to his profession are yet more fully discovered in a letter written just after he began to preach. "By these active duties I hope to acquire a habit of more energy, and to gain something of practical wisdom, and to become a better member of society, and minister of the hopes and comforts of the gospel to the poor and sorrowing. My dear ———, what a holy and glorious profession has God permitted me to assume! I feel that it is a blessing for which I can never be grateful enough. Its duties seem to be those of the good spirits who are messengers of mercy and love to us; bearing consolation to the afflicted, and hope to the desponding, and

warning to the wanderer, and animation and peace to the humble and penitent. I often feel that my earlier anticipations of the happiness of the profession are indeed surpassed."

With such views of the profession in which he was to labor, he entered upon its duties. With his talents, preparations, and earnestness, he could not fail to be acceptable, and he won many hearts and left deep impressions in the several places to which he was called to preach. There was no parade of oratory, no effort for effect, nothing done for display; but his simple, unaffected, and serious style of preaching, with the uncommon purity and solemnity of his devotional exercises, excited the best sort of interest; while his exemplariness as a man, and devotedness to duty, gave the promise of usefulness to the people with whom he should be united. When the pulpit of the North Church in Salem became vacant, by the death of the venerable Dr. Barnard, the eyes of his people turned at once to Mr. Abbot as his successor. He preached to them, became acquainted with them, and was ordained as their minister on the 20th of April, 1815.

The trials of a clergyman's life are never small to a conscientious man, and in the place to which Mr. Abbot was called, they were, on some accounts, peculiarly great. He succeeded an aged and experienced minister, who had gained the full confidence and affection of his flock by his intimacy and fidelity in parochial duties. Mr. Abbot's own inclinations and views of duty would lead him also to pay peculiar attention, and devote a large share of time, to this, the most trying and difficult part of ministerial labor. He had come to a large parish, when not twenty-two years of age, with but little experience, and oppressed with a sense of responsibility. But he showed himself to be equal to

the charge. "Young as he was," says one who knew him well, "he discovered at once the wisdom and prudence which we should suppose could be the result of experience only." He secured to an uncommon degree the respect and attachment of his people, and his own love for his duties soon amounted, as he himself expressed it, almost to a passion. As far as was practicable, he made himself personally known to every individual, interested himself as a friend in their welfare, was always by their side in perplexity and sorrow, and ready to make any sacrifices of personal ease for the sake of their good. At the same time, he pursued his studies with diligence, and made especially the preparation of his sermons for the pulpit an object of chief attention. These were distinguished for the judgment with which the most impressive thoughts were selected and arranged, for great affectionateness and earnestness of address, and for a style of uniform neatness, purity, and beauty, not often excelled. He wrote much besides them to assist himself in the course of his religious inquiries, but not with a view to publication, and engaged but little in studies not connected with his profession, though he was a good classical scholar, and always fond of elegant literature.

His frame was too feeble to support this various load of cares. He had never been robust; and the duties which he pursued with so much ardor, insensibly diverted his attention from the care of himself. In the spring of 1817, his health was evidently impaired; and a little cough, which seemed alarming to some of his friends, but too slight to attract his own attention, followed him through the summer. In October, he took a little journey to the south, which injured instead of benefiting him. He felt it his duty, feeble as he was, to preach in the Unitarian church at Philadelphia, and on his return the weather was cold and

stormy; he took a severe cold, which settled upon his lungs, with a violent cough, and was accompanied with bleeding. Fearing lest he should become too weak to reach home, he pressed on with injudicious rapidity. On the day after his arrival in Salem, the first Sabbath in November, he preached to his people. The weather was tempestuous. His utterance was interrupted by a perpetual cough; and the service of the holy communion, which he administered for the last time, was a season of distress to his church, and full of the saddest forebodings. He was too ill to attend worship in the afternoon, and from that time appeared to be in a rapid decline. During the winter, he was confined to his chamber, and principally to his bed; his weakness was extreme; his voice only a whisper; and he believed himself to be a dying man. But there was nothing in him of distress, agitation, or gloom; he was the same tranquil and cheerful man that he had been in health. His unwillingness to speak of himself, and his great aversion to talking much of what was passing within him, which was always a prominent trait in his modest character, prevented his conversing much, or to many persons, of his feelings and prospects. He knew that religion did not consist in being forward to tell the secrets of the soul. He did not conceal, however, from those friends who had a right to know his thoughts, that he thought his days were numbered; and to a friend, who often watched with him, he spake frequently without reserve; dwelt upon the thought of dying with perfect calmness; expressed with energy the satisfaction and peace which he derived from the views of religion he had imbibed and preached, and especially from those affectionate and confiding sentiments respecting the essential goodness of God, which had always lain at the foundation of his piety and hope.

On the approach of spring, appearances were more favorable, and he removed to Exeter. There he spent the summer with his parents, and his strength was so far restored, that he contemplated a return to his ministerial labors in the autumn. A letter which he wrote in July to an intimate friend, presents a beautiful exemplification of his habitual piety. "I think," he says, "that I gain strength, and now cannot but rejoice in the hope, which for so long a time I felt it necessary to check as it rose, of being again permitted to minister the gospel to my beloved people. In this restoration I see the *direct* agency of Him who first breathed into me the breath of life; the skill of man, and the powers of medicine, seemed all in vain; it was *his* air, the warmth of *his* sun, the bright and cheering prospects of the earth which *his* goodness quickened and beautified, which thus far have dispelled the damps of disease, and enkindled the feeble and dying flame within me. I suppose that every person, when restored from sickness, flatters himself that the feelings of piety, which deliverance awakens, will not decay. God grant that mine may be as permanent and influential as they ought to be."

In another letter he speaks thus of his attendance on public worship, which he was just able to renew: "I could not help my mind from wandering much away, and being filled with recollections of the past years of my own life; for I had not been present at the ordinance since that distressful day when I last met our own church at the altar. I think there is no time when the heart more expands towards all present or distant, whom God has made dear to it, than when commemorating that greater Friend, whose love was stronger than death."

But the approach of autumn proved these flattering expectations to be delusive. His cough, which had never left

him, became again alarming, and it was thought expedient that he should spend the winter in a warmer climate. He acquiesced in the measure, but did not greatly desire it. "Life for its own sake," he said, "was scarcely worth preserving at such a price; but he was not his own; and he felt it to be a duty to use every means which presented a hope that he might be restored to his people." On the 8th of November, he sailed for Havana, to spend the winter with a friend in that place. But all hope of benefit from this step was disappointed. His voyage was rough and fatiguing; and although, as he very gratefully acknowledges in his journal, every possible attention was paid to his accommodation and comfort, he yet suffered much. "Upon the whole," he writes after his arrival, "I have been disappointed in regard to the voyage. My cough is somewhat increased, and my strength lessened." His residence upon the island was not more salutary. The kindest attentions of devoted friends were vain. It was soon found hazardous for him to remain within the walls of the city, and he quitted the hospitable dwelling of the old friend with whom he at first resided, for a lodging among strangers in the country. He felt that nothing had been gained, and he sometimes said so; but no complaint ever escaped his lips, no look of discontent overspread his countenance. And when it was mentioned as a subject of regret that he had quitted his country, he said, "By no means; that he considered it the peculiar appointment of Providence, and, whatever might be the event, he would not alter a single circumstance if he could."

A minute account of his residence in Cuba would be exceedingly interesting. "There was not a day of his exile," says the friend who accompanied him, "that he was not a subject for home and a nurse; yet his mind was tran-

quil and active as when in health. He commenced a journal when he left home, which he continued until increasing weakness compelled him to relinquish it, thirteen days after his arrival. What he wrote is interesting from its minute descriptions of scenes and events, and as it shows that he was alive to all around him, and could observe and reflect as he always did. His remarks upon the character and influence of the Roman Catholic superstitions, — concerning which he made full inquiry and observation, — upon the state of morals, and upon the great evils which result from making the Sabbath a day of amusement, are truly creditable to his talents and piety, and almost wonderful, when it is considered that he was so feeble as to be utterly exhausted by the effort required to write a few pages. But he was one who never would suffer the opportunity of improving his mind or his heart to pass by. He formed an acquaintance with several friars of distinction, with whom he used to converse by means of a pencil in Latin; one of whom, of superior rank and fortune, became greatly attached to him, and daily exchanged visits. Through him he was received with hospitality at the convent of which he was a member, obtained access to the library, with liberty to borrow books, and was requested to visit freely at all times. He visited the prison, the slave-market, and the burial-place of Americans, — where he attended the funeral of a young man, a fellow-passenger, — and other similar places of suffering. When the fatigue attendant on such exertions was named to him, he replied, that it was the duty of a clergyman to make himself familiar with such scenes, as they fitted him for the better discharge of his duty. So much had he at heart the one object of being a useful minister.

But the increasing heat of the weather soon rendered it impossible for him to take the necessary exercise, and his

strength hourly decayed, when, in one of those sudden changes to which the climate is subject, but against which man has made insufficient provision, he took a severe cold, which threatened a speedy termination to his sufferings. As soon as he was a little relieved, he embarked for Charleston, S. C. The sea breeze in some degree restored his appetite and strength; and when he arrived, the sensation, which every one feels on treading again his native shore, gave a stimulus to his exhausted frame, which he mistook for returning health. He immediately found kind and devoted friends, though he came to them a stranger; and received every comfort which the most affectionate and tender sympathy could bestow. But he soon found that his feelings had deceived him, and his spirits sunk for a moment under the pressure of disease, and disappointed hope, and the delay in returning home, occasioned by the lateness of the New England spring. On it being remarked to him that he was in low spirits, he answered, "No; not in low spirits, but sober. I think it very doubtful whether I am ever any better, and it is time for me now to consider myself a stranger and pilgrim on earth." He would often say, "O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest!" He sometimes regretted the distraction of mind produced by travelling, and said there was great justice in the remark of Jeremy Taylor, that "no one can be devout who leads a wandering life." The thought of dying was evidently familiar to him. As he was riding one fine morning, he applied to himself the lines written by Michael Bruce, just before his death —

"Now spring returns — but not to me returns
The vernal joy my better years have known;
Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns,
And all the joys of life with health are flown."

Yet in the midst of a weakness and languor which might have excused him for attending exclusively to himself, he engaged in teaching the slave, who waited upon him, to read.

When the weather became hot in the middle of April, he left Charleston, and reached Philadelphia by packet on the 22d, so much reduced that it was thought doubtful whether he could live to reach home. His father and several friends met him there. Their presence produced a temporary exhilaration of spirits, but his strength was rapidly decreasing, and from that time he could speak only in a whisper.

He arrived in Exeter, at the abode of his parents, in June. During the summer, his decline was certain, but gradual. He had too long contemplated the event to be moved by it. His whole demeanor remained collected and tranquil. There was a quietness in his manner, a placid gentleness in every look and word which came from him, which discovered that death had no terrors to sadden or deject him, and that he had no duty now but to withdraw his interest from earthly things, and "prune his flight for heaven." The same desire to save others from pain, which had always been eminently characteristic of him, prevented him for a long time from speaking of his death to the friends who were with him, and made him reluctant to convey, even by any thing in his manner, that he thought himself so near his departure. But about a fortnight before his death, he communicated to his father his belief that all hope of recovery was passed; said that he had long since relinquished hope; that he had wished to live that he might be useful to his parish, and that he might be instrumental in communicating religious instruction to his brother and sister; but he was convinced that, for the wisest and best reasons, this was not permitted, and he perfectly acquiesced. After this

disclosure, his mind seemed relieved. Every thing indicated composure of spirit and a quiet waiting to be gone. He was, for the most part, spared much pain, and the powers of his mind remained perfectly unimpaired. During the last week of his life, he listened occasionally, in the little time in which his extreme exhaustion would suffer him to command his attention, to passages from the Bible and other pious books, and never omitted his habit of retiring to his devotions till a few days before his death. Two days previous to that event, he made a memorandum, in writing, of several little things, which he wished should be given as remembrances to some of his friends, and renewed the request, which he had made on leaving the country, that a certain part of his library, containing his most valuable theological books, should be given to his church for the use of their future ministers.* In the night of October 6th, his complaints increased, and his dissolution was evidently near. Toward morning, he passed through a severe paroxysm of pain, and his breath afterward grew shorter. He called his brother to him, and bade him look upon him, and see what religion would do for man at the hour of death. When the time of his departure came, he was sensible of its arrival, and calmly said, "Mother, I am going to leave you." He kissed her, and said, "Where is my father?" When his father came, he gave him also a parting kiss, and then, looking up to heaven, pronounced in an audible, distinct voice,

* The following is a memorandum which he made when he sailed for Havana: —

"I wish to leave all those books, which are marked in the catalogue which I handed you, to the North Society, for the use of their pastor for the time being. In this way I hope that, when I shall speak to my beloved people no more, I may still, in a remote manner, be doing good to them and to their children."

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." No other words were heard but the ejaculation, "Blessed Jesus!—" He requested to remain quiet, and his eyes were still raised, as in prayer, when he gently ceased to breathe. Thus he died as he lived, in every thing consistent, in every thing beautiful. He was indeed ripened for a better world. His career was short, but few men will live to do more for religion. One such example of the power of Christianity to purify and exalt the character, and to throw a heavenly lustre over the bed of death, is worth many longer lives of ministerial usefulness.

I have been thus minute in the details of Mr. Abbot's life, because it appeared to me that his character could be fairly drawn only by thus making it speak for itself. A formal description of it would convey but a general and faint idea of what he was, and be quite insufficient in liveliness and truth. His was strictly, and without mixture, a religious character. There appeared in him a peculiar maturity of those graces which distinguish the *Christian* from all other morality. He might well be called, in that expressive phrase which Dr. Buchanan has recorded, "A MAN OF THE BEATITUDES." You saw, upon the slightest acquaintance, that he had formed himself with care on the example of his Master, and that it was his aim to be always like him, gentle, meek, humble, and tranquil. His natural dispositions and temper were undoubtedly good; he neither exemplified nor believed the doctrine of man's original depravity. His mind was finely strung, and its powers nicely balanced; and God seems to have given him no strength of passion, except sensibility. His sensibility was acute and delicate. Perhaps of this part of himself he was not sufficiently master; but it contributed to make him a very interesting man. It gave a great glow and ardor to his friendship, and made his

attachments strong and pure. It gave him great zeal in his religion, and probably influenced him to consider it, so much as he did, a matter of the affections. He valued its purifying, elevating, and consoling influences on the heart, as the great object and design of the gospel. He could not bear that it should run into literary or metaphysical speculations, or be wasted upon any thing which has a tendency to cool the fervor of the spirit, or repress the warmth of the affections. But there was nothing of extreme animation, nothing loud and furious in his fervor. Religion was emphatically with him *the still, small voice;* all within and without obeyed it, but without any bustle or ostentation; it was always sober and calm, except when occasionally it excited to excess the gentler emotions, and checked his utterance, and found vent in tears. This, which describes his general character, is a description also of his preaching. He, perhaps, never was vehement, and seldom touched the strings of the stronger passions; but he always interested you, and his sentiments came upon your soul like the mild fanning of a sweet breeze, and you forgot to ask whether he was eloquent; and you perceived how much he was engaged, not by the power of his declamation, or the violence of his gesture, but by the quivering of his lip, and the filling of his eye, and his interrupted utterance.

These qualities rendered him particularly engaging in the pastoral duties of his office. His tenderness and sensibility soothed those whom he visited in trouble, and rendered him deservedly dear to his flock; while the evident sincerity and depth of his piety wrought as an example to promote their devotion; teaching them by his own devout and serious, yet cheerful deportment, to make religion the constant and intimate friend of their lives. His devotedness to them was great. He made their interests his own, and appeared to

have no wishes, pursuits, or plans, with which they were not associated. A separation from them was the only subject on which he could not speak, to the last, without emotion. Of death he conversed calmly; but when he thought of his people, he was moved. "On this subject," he says, in a letter from Charleston, March 3, 1819, "I must think and feel in silence. I have not yet sufficient self-command to speak to any one of my fears and hopes, and hardly dare trust myself yet to look steadily forward to the possibilities of the future. Before I was sick, perhaps I might have had more firmness of heart; but the numberless and unexpected expressions of kind interest which the season of my calamity has called forth, from those whose affections I desired most earnestly to conciliate, have created and nourished feelings which I can never lose, and strive as yet in vain rightly to regulate." His sensibility upon this topic remained, when every other earthly object seemed to be merged in the thought of heaven; and the constant, kind, and delicate attentions of the people he so much loved were in the highest degree grateful and soothing.

It is not strange that to such a man his friends should be warmly attached; and the energy with which they speak of him forms the most unsuspicious eulogium of his worth. They seem to labor for expressions that shall adequately convey their sense of his excellence; even they who knew him from infancy, who have been familiar with him at every period of his life, who were grown when he was a boy, and have watched the whole progress of his character, regard him with a sort of veneration, as if he were a purer being than commonly visits earth. Such is the fascinating power of a character consistently religious. The proverb did not hold true, in respect to him, that no one is great to his inti-

mates;* for it is they, chiefly, that looked upon him with wonder. They say that although, being human, he must have had his faults; yet they never discovered them, and cannot tell what they were.

Habitual and fervent piety was his ruling principle. It was his settled reverence for the divine character, and his trust in the perfect wisdom and goodness of Providence, that supported his perpetual evenness of disposition, and gave him so much resignation and cheerfulness in the long trial of his sickness, and his weary approach to the tomb. During his voyage, when his nights were made restless by his cough and boisterous weather, his mind, he said, was tranquillized by the recollection of passages from the Psalms; and he remarked on their wonderful adaptation to every season and circumstance of affliction. He mentioned also the pleasure he took in repeating that beautiful hymn of Mrs. Steele, which begins thus: —

"O Lord, my best desires fulfil,
And teach me to resign
Life, health, and comfort to thy will;
And be thy pleasure mine."

The sentiment of this hymn expresses the habitual temper of his mind.

I do not believe that he had a particle of asperity in him. He indulged no ill-will; he would not willingly hurt the feelings of the meanest, and never allowed himself to feel uncharitably toward those who differed from him. He was truly liberal; although perfectly decided in his own opin-

* Hannah More has applied it to *Christians*, once in its full extent, and once as follows: "It requires as much circumspection to be a *Christian* as to be 'a hero to one's *valet de chambre*.'"

ions, and in his aversion to some systems, as corruptions of the gospel, and of injurious tendency, yet he unfailingly spoke of those who held such views with tenderness and respect; he allowed them, readily, the excellences that belonged to them, and found pleasure in commending where commendation was due.

The views of the Christian religion, on which a character so truly Christian was built, and to which he held with unaltered and even increasing satisfaction to the last, were simple and unperplexed. He loved to regard the gospel as a gift to all men, of every condition and capacity, which the simplest might understand, and every one alike practise. Its great, important, essential doctrines he believed to be very few and very plain, and grieved that they should have been so much darkened by words without knowledge. In accordance with this, he observed, after his partial recovery from his first confinement, that the truths which he then found important to him, were exceedingly few; and that to which he clung for support, when, from extreme debility, his mind was incapable of retaining another idea, was, that salvation had come to him by Jesus Christ.

He was a decided Unitarian upon principle and from inquiry. He believed the doctrine of the single and unapproached supremacy of the Father to be a clear and most important doctrine of revealed religion. He honored Jesus as the Son and Messenger of God, and believed that he had an existence before he entered our world; he never spoke of him but in terms of veneration and love; but he reserved his *worship* for the Father. HIM he delighted to contemplate and speak of in his paternal character; his goodness, universal and impartial, he believed to be essential to his perfection and glory, and was perpetually displaying it in his preaching to the adoration and love of his people. He

had no belief that he had formed any being necessarily evil, and incapable by nature of pleasing him; or that he suffers men to come into existence subject to a corruption which they cannot remove, on account of which they are to perish forever, except he please of his own mercy to prevent it; and that this mercy he will exert only in favor of a few elect. He knew that the Scriptures did not teach him this; he felt that reason and conscience, and the affections of the heart, revolt from it; and he was sure that it appeared to attribute a dishonorable government to the God of mercy. He, on the contrary, believed that all men are placed on an equal footing, to be tried with an impartial trial, and judged with an impartial judgment; that none are excluded from the benefits of the gospel; and that nothing but an abuse of the means, which are put in every man's power, can deprive any one of that immortality for which he is created. Hence his preaching was affectionate; he endeavored to move by representations of the astonishing goodness and mercy of God, and to win by accents of kindness. He did not neglect, however, occasionally to urge the terrors of the Lord. But he did it as "a strange work," with a faltering voice and quivering lip,* and was once so affected by the subject that his emotion obliged him to pause and recover himself.

His views of the Christian life were exceedingly exalted, and he insisted upon a very pure and rigid standard of moral excellence. "It seems to me," he says, "that very much of the want of religious principle and conduct among men is owing to their want of conviction how hard it is to become a sincere and obedient follower of Christ. We are apt to think too little of the extent and variety of religious

* See a fine passage in Robert Hall's Sermons.

obligations, and the difficulties and trials, the sorrows and temptations, which render it so necessary to work with earnestness. We are in no danger of exerting too much self-denial, or maintaining too unearthly a temper, for we are called upon to be *perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.*"

His opinion in regard to the dependence of future felicity on character, and the manner in which the gospel prepares for it, is so well stated in the following paragraph, and was so important in its influence upon his whole religious system, that we cannot forbear the gratification of copying it. It is from a letter without date. — "The design of all the obedience which the gospel requires, — of its precepts, rules, and spirit, — is to form us to a certain character, to certain habits and feelings, which are the *qualifications* for a spiritual state hereafter. When we think of the present world, it is evident, that, in order to rightly discharging the services relating to it, in order to enjoy the blessings and comforts it yields, we need a peculiar kind of character, — a character *adapted* to this world. It is thus with regard to a future state; in order to be qualified for its services and joys, we need to have certain habits, dispositions, capacities, without which we should be unqualified to perform its services or share its joys. Death makes no change in our character, — it only alters the *state* of our existence; and we shall enter a future world with the same habits, feelings, tempers, with which we departed from this. And the great design of the gospel is, by enjoining certain acts, and inculcating certain dispositions, to train us up to that character which is meet for the inheritance of the saints."

It would be easy to go on and multiply extracts which should make still more complete the delineation of his character and opinions; but it is time to forbear. The memory

of what he was can never pass away from the minds of his friends and people; and we have done enough, perhaps, in our endeavor so to make him known as shall promote the interests of religion.

As such a character is valuable to all Christians, so it is especially to those who are pursuing their preparation for the sacred ministry. The cause of truth and human improvement rejoices in the services of such men; and let them go forth to the labors of the church thus exemplary and blameless themselves, and they need not fear to be disappointed or overthrown. Let them make it their first care to *live* the gospel, and they cannot be unsuccessful in preaching it.

And while such men are formed beneath the influence of the plain and simple doctrines of Unitarianism, let none be so absurd as to believe that they deny all which is vital and sanctifying in the gospel. Who can look upon such and not be persuaded that this faith is abundantly sufficient to all the wants of the soul; that man does not need mysterious and unintelligible dogmas to excite a reverence for God, and keep piety alive; but that the virtues and graces, which most adorn man, and which are by all Christians most valued as the genuine fruits of their religion, may spring up, and flourish, and become mature, under the influence of a system which has been branded as cold, heartless, and impious — as the offspring of boasting reason, and little better than infidel philosophy? If our Lord was right in declaring that false prophets should be known by their fruits, who will pronounce *this* man a false prophet? And who, with an ordinary share of candor, will refuse to acknowledge, that that MAY at least be the truth of God, which has proved so abundant in the fruits of his spirit? For ourselves, we rest upon it with perfect confidence; we rejoice in it as the

WISDOM OF GOD AND THE POWER OF GOD; it has supported many, who have gone before us, amid duty, trial, and danger, and been to them as the rod and staff of God in the shadow of death. We humbly trust that it will equally sustain us; and although every where spoken against, and treated by our brethren as a denial of the faith, we will not cease to love it, or shrink from defending it, as the truth which is to save; we are satisfied to be companions of such men as Abbot; and, turning from the judgment of man, will say, *Our witness is in heaven; our record is on high.**

* The writer of this article is indebted to the kindness of several friends, whose communications have assisted him in preparing it, and whose language he has occasionally interwoven with his own, when it could not be altered without injury to the sense.

MEMOIR

OF

NATHAN PARKER, D. D.

"How shall we mourn thee?—With a LOFTY TRUST!
With a GLAD FAITH! whose eye, to track the just,
Through shades and mysteries lifts a glance of LOVE."

MRS. HEMANS.

MEMOIR

OF

NATHAN PARKER, D. D.

The author of this volume of Sermons * was one of those men who leave a mark on the society in which they lived. He did not leave the world as he found it. He impressed upon it the character of his mind, teaching, and example. His friends feel that he ought not to pass away without a memorial, nor without some attempt to extend and perpetuate the influence of his character and principles. His principles are set forth in his sermons as they came from himself. His character presents an example of personal and professional fidelity, upon which all Christians, and especially Christian ministers, may dwell with improvement. I may not succeed in my attempt to display it; but I can truly adopt the words of John Newton in a similar case: "If it have the same effect upon my brethren in the ministry while they read it, that it had upon me while writing it, it will humble and shame them." May it also encourage and quicken them!

Nathan Parker was born at Reading, Massachusetts, on the 5th day of June, 1782. He was the son of a re-

* The Memoir was originally prefixed to a volume of Sermons selected from the writings of Dr. Parker.

spectable farmer, and happily knew nothing, in his younger days, of those luxurious indulgences by which so many promising minds are made effeminate and slothful. He was accustomed, in later life, to congratulate himself on this circumstance, and to say that he owed most of what was good in his character to his early privations and hardships. He often spoke with peculiar gratitude of the influence of his grandmother. The native elements of his character developed themselves without constraint or forcing, and gave earnest of the person that he was to be; "the child was father of the man." The buoyancy of spirits, the energy of purpose, and the power of influencing others, which distinguished him in mature life, are said to have been traits of his boyhood. It is said that he was "a great favorite with other boys, and king among them in their sports." When, at the age of ten or twelve, he was severely afflicted by inflammatory rheumatism for a long period, "he would sometimes cry all night from the pain, and the next day, as soon as he had got his breakfast, be off on his crutches after partridges, which he caught in snares. He was never in the least degree vicious," it is added, "either in disposition or conduct." And such was his desire for improvement, during one period, that he would rise before others in the morning in order to secure time for reading and study.

It is not surprising, that, with such qualities, the young farmer's boy was removed from following the plough, and sent, like Amos of old, to the service of the prophets. It belongs to the yeomanry of New England to reverence learning; and many are their sturdy sons, whom they have released from the furrow, and sent out, at no small personal sacrifice, to be fitted for the husbandry of the church, or the honorable toils of the state. Nathan, the youngest of

two sons, was to be of this number. Having received his preparatory education at Boxborough, from his relative, the Rev. Joseph Willard, minister of that place, he became a member of Harvard College, at the age of seventeen, and was graduated in 1803.

The succeeding year he passed at Worcester, as teacher of the grammar school; availing himself of that honorable office to earn the means of pursuing his professional studies, while he gratified his love of action and usefulness by imparting instruction. He had intended to study law; but, being led to change his purpose, he, the next year, entered the family of Dr. Bancroft as a student in theology, and there remained until he began to preach. During his residence in this place, he endeared himself to all who knew him, and with the venerable and distinguished divine with whom he was domesticated, he formed a friendship which continued unbroken and cordial until his death. His letters abound in expressions of attachment to him and his family.

In 1805, he was appointed tutor in Bowdoin College, Maine, where he remained for two years, discharging its duties, and at the same time preaching on Sunday, when opportunity presented. In the month of May, 1808, he preached, in the way of exchange, in the pulpit of the south parish of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, then vacant after the death of Dr. Haven. He was a stranger to the place and the people; few of them knew even the name of the young man whose clear good sense and simple earnestness of manner were taking hold upon their minds. The impression was decided. They desired to hear him further; and the result was, that the society gave him an invitation to settle, as its minister, on the 6th of July, in which the

church concurred by a distinct vote on the 31st, and he was ordained on the 14th day of September.

It is not possible to place a young minister in any congregation without exposing him to great trials. They will be different in different situations, but in all they are great. Youth, inexperience, diffidence; the flattery of some, the cavils of others, the indifference of more; the urgency of these to persuade him to a worldly policy, and of those to bring his religious movements to their own standard of zeal or lukewarmness; the consciousness that he is watched both by well-wishers and ill-wishers, and a trembling sense of insufficiency and responsibility; — all this, and much more, fills his path with perplexity and trial; and he enters with weakness, and fear, and much trembling, on a work that seems the more difficult the more thoughtfully he surveys it. In the situation which Mr. Parker had entered, besides these common causes of solicitude, there were other peculiar circumstances of trial. For it was not then, as it is now, a large, flourishing, and eminent congregation, to be called to whose superintendence is one of the highest honors the church has to offer. On the contrary, it was a feeble and depressed society, struggling for very existence. It had been for three years without a pastor, and, suffering the evils of a destitute church, had dwindled away from its prosperity in the good days of Dr. Haven, till it presented but the remnant of its former strength. In a word, all was languishing. The very situation of the meeting-house, being at an inconvenient distance from the larger part of the worshipers, helped to discourage; and only the religious confidence of a few spirited men prevented the dissolution of the society. In undertaking the charge of a congregation under such unpropitious circumstances, he acted on his favorite principle, — we must do our duty, and leave the

result with God. "I thought the path of duty plain," he said, "and I became the minister of this people. With what feelings I entered on the office, it were vain to attempt a description. I considered that I was only making an experiment, and expected that a short time would terminate my connection with this people." * But Providence ordained that he should continue, and granted him a signal recompense of his fidelity and devotion. It is an example to encourage others to attempt fearlessly any work which Providence may assign them, assured that disinterested efforts in the cause of Christ cannot be lost.

As his history, from this time, is but the story of his ministry, I shall complete my view of this before going on with the personal narrative of his life. He appears to have laid down for himself two great principles, from adherence to which his success, through the divine blessing, mainly resulted. The first was, to maintain a perfect independence; as he himself says, "It was among the resolutions with which I entered on my ministry, to conduct it in all respects as if I were to be forever in the office which I then entered; to adopt no temporary expedients to gain favor; but to pursue the path of duty whenever it was discovered, and wherever it might lead." † To this principle he strictly adhered; and not less so to the second, which was, to make his profession his only care, and to allow nothing to interfere with his attention to that great concern. One might fancy that he was constantly repeating to himself the words of the apostle, — *Give thyself wholly to them;* and he became a minister only, as Paul was an apostle only. He felt that he should be unworthy of his place, if he could not devote himself to it exclusively. He carried this feeling so

* Sermon on leaving the old meeting-house, 1826.

† Ibid.

far, that he used to say, "My parish first, then my family." And this claim of his people was in his view so paramount and sacred, that he would not allow himself any hours on which they might not intrude, nor any studies or pursuits beyond the range of his profession; all was theirs; he scarcely permitted himself any recreation except for their sakes, and absence from their circle was impatiently borne by him as if with a sort of homesickness.

Entering his office with such views, he carried into all its departments the spirit which insures success. The narrative of his life is simply the illustration of this remark. When we have related how it affected his preaching, his pastoral service, his various devices for doing good, and the power of his personal character, we have told the whole history of his ministry, and showed the secret of its efficiency.

I am inclined to dwell somewhat at large on the character of his preaching, because it seems to me to have been formed on the most just principles, and to offer important suggestions for the consideration of those engaged in the same work. The single aim of his preaching seems to have been usefulness. In the choice of his subjects, and in his mode of composition and delivery, he sacredly excluded all consideration of himself, his own reputation, or the mere taste of his hearers; he considered simply what would do good. His sermons were thus remarkably characteristic of himself, — plain, unpretending, unambitious, but strong in manly sense, and preëminently serious and evangelical. He loved those views best which are most peculiarly Christian, and that mode of presenting them which appeals most directly to men's sense of responsibleness. The adaptation of Christianity to man as being in a state

of imperfection and sin, and needing great exertion to bring him to holiness and God, seemed to him the view on which the preacher should rest. Therefore he was accustomed to address men as sinners, exposed to ruin, and needing to be reclaimed. Whence repentance was esteemed by him the grand theme of the pulpit. "Whatever my subject may be," he used to say, "I always come round to repentance before I have done with it. Christ began with it, and men will need it, at least as long as I am here to preach to them." He thought it a sad error to address promiscuous congregations as if all were interested in religion, and needed but to make progress in it. He knew that the great majority need to be persuaded to *begin* a religious life; and, as he remarked shortly before his death, he esteemed those the best sermons which urge men to begin to be religious, and teach them how to begin. It was this idea which suggested his advice to a young preacher, to remember, in preparing every sermon, that it might be the last discourse which some impenitent sinner would have the opportunity to hear; and to say something which should be suited to touch the heart of such a one.

His adherence to these maxims gave a weighty and affecting tone to his pulpit. It also established a central point about which all his teaching revolved, and to which all was referred. It enabled his hearers to discern to what the whole system tended, and showed them what use is to be made of every truth. Some preachers fail of presenting any such rallying point. They discourse at random on a great variety of topics, but have no one grand idea running through them all, by which they are connected together and made to appear as parts of one great whole; in consequence of which their ministry has no unity, no purpose, no tendency to any result; the blows they strike may be

powerful and true, but there is no concert between them, and they are as those that beat the air. Mr. Parker had an aim from the first; he fixed his attention on one object, and had reference to that in all that he preached; thinking every discourse thrown away which did not help to effect it; in consequence of which his preaching was altogether practical, and progressive toward a definable result.

Not that he neglected the discussion of truth, and avoided theological speculation. On the contrary, he was fond of it, and often pursued it with evident delight in a train of close and even metaphysical reasoning. His hearers speak with fond recollection of many such efforts, when his strong and sagacious sense pursued and dissected some knotty subject, and laid it open to the satisfactory comprehension of all. But he regarded such discussion as wholly subservient to a further end, as simply preparatory to the application he was to make to the conscience and the heart. He esteemed it little less than sacrilege to spend the sacred hour of public worship in debating some problem in ethics and divinity, and to leave it without pointing out to the hearers the use they should make of it. He knew that speculative truth is good for nothing, except so far as it acts upon the character; and that it is made to act on the character, not by simply being explained to the understanding, but by being made also interesting to the affections and urgent to the conscience. When thus applied, he recognized it as the Christian orator's great instrument; and hence he did not regard that as the most truly practical preaching which deals only in the inculcation of outward virtue, and contents itself with the enforcement of positive precepts. "Precepts are of little use," he said, "when the doctrines which enforce and support them are not regarded." Remembering that men are to be sanctified by the *truth*, he was not backward

to urge the doctrines of religion; he knew that they are the only foundation on which holy principle and steadfast virtue can be erected, and that no man will care enough for religion to build up for himself a religious character, unless he is interested in the glorious realities which religious doctrine unfolds. But he would not treat those doctrines controversially, in the way of debate and disputation. He thought this more likely to hinder than to promote the practical influence he desired. He explained them agreeably to his own view of them, and in their own connection with duty, leaving erroneous views to perish of themselves. As he himself expressed it, "he acted on the maxim, that the best way to refute error is to preach the truth; and he did not think it his duty to bring forward and refute, in a controversial manner, the errors which exist among Protestant Christians, any more than to bring forward and refute the errors of Popery."

Instead of controversially, he may rather be said to have preached religious doctrines *experimentally;* for it was in their bearing on the affections and desires, the joys and trials of the spirit, on the struggles of the soul with its temptations and sorrows, and in the encouragement, strength, and peace which they impart in the various conflicts of the spiritual life, that he habitually delighted to think of them and speak of them. Hence the unction and impression which the most serious and devout found in his discourses, and the interest which they had to those who were anxiously seeking for the way of life.

Thus his preaching was useful from its constant union of sound instruction with affectionate exhortation. It excited the mind to a train of thought, and on that thought built an appeal to the heart and conscience. Without any display of what is called oratory, or of the elegance and splen-

dor which excite admiration and applause, it possessed that truth, straight-forwardness, energy, and fervor, which enchain attention, fasten conviction, and leave lasting impressions. In all this it was, as I said, a fac-simile of the man; and not least so in the fact that it lost nothing, in respect to its power, but rather gained, from familiarity. As those who knew him most intimately best appreciated his uncommon worth of character, so those who most habitually heard his preaching best realized its uncommon power. Its sway over the heart, its strength to move the affections, to impress, and overcome, — though sometimes felt by strangers, who have been known to carry away lasting impressions from a single sermon, — were yet best understood by those who found it the more irresistible the more they were accustomed to it. How far more valuable than that showy oratory which astonishes and captivates those who hear it for the first time, but which palls upon repetition, and puts to sleep those who are accustomed to it!

In his preparation for the pulpit, though he had no regard for the merely literary excellences of composition, he yet was conscientiously careful; laborious, however, rather in thinking and arranging his thoughts, than in putting them into form. His manner seems to have been to meditate his subjects thoroughly before writing, and then to write rapidly, and with little revision. Oftentimes, on Saturday evening, he would walk his study for hours, revolving his subject in his head, maturing his thoughts, and exciting himself by reflection, putting nothing on paper till this process was finished, and then, at a late hour, would sit down at his desk, and pour out rapidly and without intermission the result of his preparation. This practice, not unanalogous to that of the extemporaneous speaker, gave something of the strength and ardor of the extemporary manner to his style of composition.

He never preached in his church extempore. But he was accustomed from an early date of his ministry to speak in a familiar way at a private meeting, held in the house where he boarded; and he thus gradually prepared himself for a more public service, which he afterwards conducted in a hall or lecture-room during a large part of every year. He was not gifted with any native fluency of speech; and his first efforts at extemporaneous speaking are represented as having been far from successful. Some of his friends doubted if it were worth while for him to persevere. But he was not to be discouraged; he told them that if a few of them would stand by him, he would learn. They did so, and he learned. And it should be distinctly told, for the sake of other beginners, that, by dint of application and perseverance he became a ready, interesting, and occasionally eloquent speaker. His little evening meetings were the favorite resort of those who most valued his influence. There he was seen and heard to the greatest advantage. Unshackled by notes, unembarrassed by a huge house and a promiscuous assembly, surrounded by confiding friends, and sure of their sympathy, he gave free scope to his mind and feelings, and was often borne away by his excitement into regions of thought and imagination which surprised both himself and those who heard him. I understand that he placed great confidence on these meetings as eminently adapted to be useful. His particular opinions respecting them may be learned from a passage in a letter to a young minister, which is so just and important that it deserves to be quoted at length.

"With regard to extra meetings for religious instruction, I will make a few remarks, suggested by my own experience. I believe that they may be very useful; but great discretion and independence are necessary in managing them. They

should never be placed on the same ground as is *public worship on the Sabbath.* People should not be taught that attending these meetings is a commanded duty, and that all worldly duties must yield to them; nor are those to be censured who entirely neglect them, provided they exhibit the proper evidence of piety. I believe, too, that these meetings, as to their frequency, and the manner of conducting them, should be *entirely* under the control of the minister. He should appoint them when he thinks expedient, and discontinue them when his own health, or the situation of his people, demand that they be discontinued. They may be frequent, or otherwise, as occasion may require, always having regard to circumstances, and guarding carefully against producing a surfeit of preaching — the worst kind of surfeits. In the management of such meetings, it is worse than useless to attempt to run a race with those who depend for success on the mere excitement of passion. * * * I am disposed to think that, in these meetings, plain instruction should be dispensed in a plain and forcible manner; and especially that great care should be taken to render people able to read with understanding the Scriptures, and that a pungent application of the truths communicated should be made to their hearts and consciences. Extemporary preaching, on these occasions, I believe to be the best; and you will find it not difficult to practise, and a great relief to you in the discharge of your duties. With respect to the devotional exercises, I uniformly ask no one to assist me. I have several individuals, whose aid would be valuable to me; but I do not call upon them for assistance. My reasons are these: Those best able to be useful in this way are very modest men. It would be painful to them to make themselves prominent, and nothing but a strong sense of duty would induce them to do it. There are, on the other hand, others

who would delight to be thus distinguished, but who are totally unfit for the service. If I were to ask assistance from the wise only, the vain would be grieved, and become uneasy. If I were to call upon the latter, it would destroy what little humility they now possess; injure them, and, as I think, the cause of religion. I therefore perform myself all the devotional exercises."

It is often thought that private meetings, such as here spoken of, should be made to have a different object from those of the regular congregation on Sunday. But Dr. Parker appears to have thought otherwise. I cannot find that in his selection of subjects, or his manner of treating them, he varied from his ordinary preaching, excepting that in his private lectures he pursued *courses* of subjects, and thus was somewhat more systematic in his instruction. The topics of these courses were very various; the exposition of a book; a view of fundamental truths and duties; the history and ritual of the Old Testament; the parables of Christ; the being and attributes of God; — which last series is remembered with peculiar delight by those who heard it. But, various as they were, he adhered sacredly to his rule of immediate usefulness. Whatever the discussion, he always conducted it to an appeal to the heart and conscience. You would suppose it had been selected for no other purpose than to afford an opportunity for an exhortation to a religious life, and that instruction and argument had no other end than to lay the foundation of a call to faith, repentance, and obedience.

I close this view of his character as a preacher, with a description, from one who heard him much, of his manner at these private lectures. It is written in a glowing style, but is valuable for its corroboration of what has been said, and for some hints respecting the preacher's personal appearance.

"And here I must say, I think he was truly eloquent; or, if it was not eloquence, it certainly had all its effects. Often were his hearers chained down by the hour together, in almost breathless silence, by these solemn and pathetic appeals; and what gave a charm and effect to his eloquence, was the remarkable and ever-varying expressions of his fine face. With a countenance sometimes haggard, worn down, perhaps, by a series of almost sleepless nights, and painfully contending with his physical difficulty, — at the commencement, from his faltering manner, it might be doubted whether he would be able to proceed. But soon all doubts would vanish. As he became engaged in his subject, his dark eye would brighten, his countenance become more and more animated, his language more and more rich and fervent, and his whole manner more and more warm and glowing, till the infirmities of the flesh were merged in the triumph of the spirit, and preacher and hearer, unconscious of time, were completely carried away by the sublimity of the subject. In some of these touching appeals, I have seen the tear start, the spirit of the hearer quail, and his cheek burn with shame, as with a flashing eye, a contemptuous curl of the lip, and a deepening shade upon his dark countenance, expressive of his abhorrence of the enormity and detestation at the meanness of sin, he laid bare to itself some bosom loaded with guilt, and probed to the quick its slumbering conscience. But his severity was confined to sin in the abstract; his heart melted with pity for the sinner. Depicting to him with a subdued tone, and in most mournful strains, the awful consequences of continued transgression, the doom of the ungodly, he would, — his countenance lighting up with an almost heavenly radiance, and a sweet smile all the while playing upon his face, as if he had discharged a painful duty, and thrown a heavy burden from his

heart, and was in haste to touch a theme more congenial with his own pure spirit,—he would, with the most winning accents, descant upon the beauty of holiness—the peace and joy of believing — the bliss of heaven, — and kindred subjects, on which he so much delighted to dwell, long after the time usually allotted to such exercises had expired."

Dr. Parker's views of the ministry and its objects, as well as the bent of his own mind, led him to attach peculiar importance to the private duties of the pastoral relation. The mere preacher, however excellent, seemed to him to be fulfilling very partially the design of the sacred office. He regarded the minister as the servant and guide of the people, not only, like the priests of old, by appearing before God for them in the temple, but by a constant intercourse of sympathy, counsel, and kind offices, teaching from house to house, and watching for souls in season and out of season. Upon this idea he formed his own ministry. As I have already said, he regarded his time, his knowledge, his talents, himself, as not his own, but as belonging to his people, and to be devoted absolutely to their service. He was therefore always amongst them, sharing their joys and sorrows, and close at hand in every moment of trial, anxiety, and sin, with consolation and warning. This was his favorite employment. Many men have more frequent formal conversations on religion; perhaps he had less of this than would have been well. But there is a religious silence, as well as a religious speech, and the very air and presence of a truly devout man has oftentimes more influence than an exhortation. When occasion required, he could speak, and at any length; but his habit was, to watch the course of conversation, turn it imperceptibly to useful channels, and point to the Christian

moral by a brief remark or a single expression; and many are the weighty sayings of wisdom and truth, couched in his own terse and occasionally quaint manner, which are remembered and repeated, but which might have been forgotten if thrown out in a great flood of words.

It was in acts, rather than words, that his influence as a pastor lay; acts which sometimes cost him no little sacrifice, and which evinced a reality of faith in God and a strength of sympathy in men which mere words could not have expressed. The substantial kindnesses which he thus rendered did service to religion, and testify to his fidelity. For one of doubtful and agitated mind, he would give up hour after hour, week after week, thinking no time too much, till by long companionship and sympathy he had won him to peace and God. For the aged, infirm, and poor, he had time to spare, that he might cheer the heaviness of their solitude by familiar and holy talk. To the sick he would go with a smiling face, not for a hasty and hurried visit, with formal common-places about patience and prayer, but to sit with them and wait upon them as a brother or a son; and in the chamber of death, with quiet self-possession, he would cheer the departing sufferer as he sat long watching by his side, and bring down the peace of heaven to the dark scene of trial. In all this, nothing seemed to be done in a manner merely professional, or because he was the minister, and was expected to be present and do a certain duty. He entered into it with a feeling as if it concerned himself, and thence derived a power in such scenes, which never can belong to him who is guided merely by notions of clerical propriety, and of what is suitable for the occasion. He threw himself into the occasion, and became a part of it. He would stay about the bed of a dying friend, watch him through the night, support his head in the agony of death,

and close his eyes in their last sleep. At such seasons he had great power to sustain and soothe; not through his much speaking, but by the expression of his whole demeanor, the affections of his soul speaking through his eyes, his countenance, his whole mien. His words might be few, but they were chosen words, and the trust reposed in him made them powerful. To one he said, as her self-distrusting spirit trembled at approaching death, "He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" and her answering smile showed that the promise went home with a soothing power. On another occasion, as the fearful silence of the chamber of the dying at midday was broken by the cheerful notes of a bird alighting on a tree near the open window, he brightly said, "God is still good; — he does not forsake his creatures." In this way he said what was suggested by circumstances. Like his Master, he drew lessons from the most common objects, and sanctified trivial occurrences by making a holy use of them.

He did not go through such scenes without severe trials of feeling, which sometimes almost unmanned him; but such was his self-restraint, that he would always appear collected and calm to those whom he was called to comfort and sustain; so that his wife would sometimes remark to him, that his friends would not suspect that he had any real feeling for them; his reply to which was altogether characteristic: "It is of no consequence whether they know that I have or not."

It is a gratification to know that his solicitudes and cares were not unrewarded. He was not left to mourn over the inefficacy of the truth which he had preached, but was happy enough to witness in others, as he afterward experienced himself, the peace and hope which it imparts to the trusting spirit in its approach to the tomb. From among

the numerous evidences of this, I quote from a letter written in August, 1826.

"The events of the present season have been unusually afflictive to me. June, 1826, is strongly associated in my mind with June, 1812. I then lost one whom I regarded as a father;* I have now been deprived of one whom I loved as a brother;† and now, as then, other calamities have pressed heavily upon me, and in rapid succession. In one short month, five of my most interesting parishioners have been called away from me. But you will be surprised, and perhaps think that time has blunted the little sensibility which once I may have possessed, when I inform you, that for the last two months I have been far happier than I had been for the year preceding. I am not insensible of the losses which I have sustained; they are great and apparently irreparable losses; but they have admitted uncommon consolations. I had for many months been guilty of cherishing very discouraging views of the effects of my ministry, and been almost tempted to say, I will speak no more in the name of the Lord. As I stood by the bed of death, I have felt the reproof there administered to me. I have seen those to whom the world held out every thing to enchain them to the earth, calm and happy in the immediate prospect of breaking away from all earthly ties and endearments. I have seen those who have been left to mourn, around whom desolation seemed to be spreading wide and threatening to destroy every earthly hope, most confidingly acquiescing in the unsearchable dispensations of Providence, expressing, while their tears flowed fast, their gratitude to God, and their humble prayer, that they might bring honor to that Savior, who had guided their departed friends in life, and given them hope in death. My heart has been comforted.

* Dr. Buckminster. † Mr. N. A. Haven, Jr.

However fruitless may have been my labors, I cannot doubt the efficacy of the religion which it is my duty and my honor to preach.

"The events which have taken place have excited an increased interest in religion among us, and called me to greater efforts to assist my people in their inquiries. I trust that much good will be the result; that the death of those who were interested in every thing good, will impress religious truth upon many minds, which their living virtues could not reach. In this prospect I greatly rejoice."

It was at the period here spoken of that he closed a discourse full of Christian consolation in the following strain: —

"I cannot close this discourse without offering an humble tribute of gratitude to God and to the Redeemer. Scenes of suffering and death have opened before me with most astonishing rapidity. The great destroyer, with fatal aim, has hurled his arrows at one after another, and they have fallen before him. Mourning and death have met me at every step. Though tears have been my meat day and night, yet — blessed be God! — the scene has not been all darkness around me. I have witnessed the power of his gospel. From scenes of suffering and desolation, I have been able to gather arguments of religious gratitude and praise. I have witnessed this one truth, that the religion of Jesus, in the form in which I have been accustomed to contemplate it and to love it, has power to sustain the soul under the severest afflictions and in the hour of death. The conviction of this truth, I trust, has been wrought into my soul, and will remain there while my heart continues to circulate the warm current of life. In the house of God, I bear this testimony to the power of Christianity, and of my confidence in Christ. With a deep impression of its value and

of its necessity, I press upon you, my friends, a grateful acknowledgment of the Savior. Have any rejected his grace, I beseech such to pause, and to consider. I beseech them now to repent and turn to God, to open their hearts to the heavenly Comforter, and to the joys of a pure faith. 'Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die!'"

In filling up his office as a parish minister, it was his object to be always doing something, and in as various ways as possible, but with as little of noise and notoriety as might be. Perpetual activity, but no bustle, seemed to be his design. He, therefore, in his plans for doing good, consulted circumstances and occasions, and pressed no measure till he had prepared the way for its success. Hence he rarely, if ever, failed in any measure which he attempted. Being resolute and persevering, but never rash, he went in accordance with the intimations of Providence, and found aid from thence. When he would kindle the flame of devotion and philanthropy, he blew upon it gently, and never gave those furious and impatient blasts which put out the fire they are over-eager to light. It would be well if all who conduct important enterprises would study such examples, and learn that bustle is not strength, nor precipitation success. Real energy is calm; true power works without passion. I have seen the commander of a ship on the Atlantic Ocean move about the vessel quietly, never raising his voice, never looking or speaking as if excited, equally composed in pleasant weather and in storms, maintaining order by the power of his self-possession and tranquillity, and keeping all as quiet as himself, by the confidence which he inspired. So should it be with the spiritual pilot of the church; steadily watching for the safety and progress of all, but without impatience, impetuosity, or

tumult, he should neither strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street; but with the gentleness of his Master when on earth, and imitating the sober order of Providence, should lead the way to charity and truth.

It was in this spirit that Dr. Parker projected and executed the several plans which he set on foot for the improvement of his flock, and by means of which he effected so much for its advancement in knowledge and true holiness. It is necessary to describe these at some length, because they exhibit his pastoral policy, and the genius of his ministry, and present the picture of the religious organization of society on principles and in a method which can hardly fail to secure happy results wherever adopted.

The first of these in point of time, and certainly not the least in usefulness, was the formation of the church, that is, the communicants, — which had formerly been a body, like most churches, set apart simply for maintaining the ordinances, — into an association for religious improvement and benevolent action. It was a favorite idea of Dr. Parker, that the Founder of Christianity was the originator of that great system of associated action, by which his followers are, in the present age, accomplishing so much. The institution of the Christian church was the first instance of this association, and by the power which belongs to it, as such, it has made its way through the world. He wished to restore to the body of the communicants its place and duty in this regard. He thought that it possessed advantages beyond most other methods of organization, for the promotion of truth and charity. In an Address delivered, in 1824, before the Ministerial Conference in Berry Street, Boston, he explained his views on this point, and illustrated the principles on which he was acting. I regret that no copy of this Address has been found among his papers. It

was in conformity with those views that the church in his own parish had instituted, in 1813, a regular series of quarterly meetings, as of a society, for devotion and charity. At these meetings is transacted all the business which ordinarily demands attention, such as the appointment of delegates to any council, the care of the charity funds, and the discussion of cases of discipline. Then conversation ensues on the state of religion, the condition and wants of the poor or tempted brethren, and the measures to be devised for their relief. The meetings are thus a great means of keeping up a mutual acquaintance among the members, and a proper Christian sympathy in each other — an end still further secured by the regulation that every individual shall keep by him a list of the members. Since 1823, one of the brethren has for each meeting written a dissertation on some important subject of religious inquiry or duty, which has given a direction to the conversation of the evening. Thus the church acts as a perpetual standing committee of inquiry and charity, ready to consider and pursue any suggestions of truth and usefulness. It is not a nominal, but a visible and effective bond of faith and love; and a constant excitement to individual activity, fidelity, and watchfulness. The records of the meetings testify to the many solemn and affecting interviews, to which this arrangement has given rise; they contain elaborate reports on church relations and personal responsibility, and discussions of vital questions of truth and duty. To show the spirit of the institution, and the influence which it has been adapted to exert, I am desirous of extracting a brief passage, from a report on the state of the church, in August, 1822.

This report showed that the condition of the church had remained very nearly the same for more than a century. In answering the question, why there had been no improve-

ment during later years, three causes of hinderance were enumerated — the controversial spirit of the times, prevalent errors respecting the Lord's supper, and the imperfections of church members. Each of these causes is dwelt upon at some length. I quote a portion of the appeal to the brethren under the last head; premising, that it was written by one of the lay members.

"Perpetual watchfulness and care are the conditions on which we hold all our virtues, as well as all our worldly possessions. As *repentance* is the foundation of all Christian virtue, and implies an abhorrence of sin, as such, — do we keep alive our strong impressions on this subject? Do we ever think lightly of sin, or lead others to believe that we do? Do we give any countenance to the commission of sin, by our presence, or indirect approbation or permission?

"Christian penitence is accompanied and followed by *faith*. Do we believe — really believe — all the promises and threatenings of Jesus Christ? Do we feel daily and hourly that the eye of God is upon us? Do we realize that we shall certainly appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, not merely to answer for the deeds done in the body, but to give an account of every idle word, and to have every thought of the heart revealed? Do we act as if we were indeed pilgrims and strangers in the world? or are we as much excited by its ambition, and allured by its pleasures, and engrossed by its business, and distracted by its cares, and grieved by its troubles, as if we had no other world upon which to fix our attention?"

Similar inquiries are then suggested respecting the duties of Christian love and active benevolence. And the report ends with recommending that a day be set apart for self-examination and devotion by each member of the church; when "all the members of this church should, as far as may

be possible and consistent with their usual avocations, employ their thoughts and devote their leisure moments to the purposes above mentioned.

"And that the same good work may be always kept in mind, they would further recommend, that one hour (say from eight to nine o'clock of the Saturday evening preceding the communion) should, for the future, be set apart by all the members of this church, and employed in reflecting and conversing upon the best mode of advancing the interests of the church, or in prayer for its welfare. They believe that such a course would give every individual a deeper interest in the general prosperity of the church, and lead him to exert a happier influence on those around him."

The measures here recommended were adopted; and some years afterward, the report was again taken up and the resolutions renewed. One easily understands how religion must flourish, when its friends thus unite in efforts to increase its power over themselves and to extend it to others.

The benefits of this meeting had not been long experienced when it was perceived to be desirable that they should be extended to the female members of the church. Accordingly a quarterly meeting was established, when they assembled together in a large room belonging to one of their number, passed the afternoon in social and religious converse, and took tea together. Their minister was regularly present on the occasion, and led their devotions; and he delighted to observe, that, through this simple means, the bonds of sympathy and good-will were essentially strengthened, and that, by the substantial acts of kindness to which it gave birth, the happiness as well as improvement of many was greatly promoted. Similar objects were effected by a monthly meeting of the ladies of the parish,

when the time is spent in reading and working, and subscriptions are made for the encouragement of domestic missions and other religious charities.

The next institution was that of the Sunday school, a favorite object with Dr. Parker, which was commenced in 1818. He introduced the project in a sermon on Sunday, and immediately had the happiness of securing the enlightened and devoted coöperation of men, more than one of whom were abundantly competent to the good management of such an institution. It is striking and instructive to look back to that period, when the Sunday school was a novelty in the land, slowly welcomed by the community, and coldly favored, if not expressly discountenanced, by many excellent persons, who thought it unnecessary in this country, ill-adapted to our state of society, and likely to be hurtful to religious instruction in families, — and to perceive how readily Dr. Parker and his friends penetrated beyond the objections to it, and entered into a full perception of its merits. Under such auspices, the school had no infancy; it succeeded at once; it reached its maturity while other schools were struggling with the first obstacles. When we remember who were his coadjutors, we do not wonder that he surrendered the management of the school wholly into their hands, and adopted it as a principle that the charge of the Sunday school should be given to the laity, without superintendence or responsibility on the part of the minister. He thought the effect of religious teaching on the children, and on their parents, likely to be far better, if it should come, not from him whose profession it is to teach religion, but from men in the active walks of life, whose devotedness to this service on Sunday would be a new and impartial testimony to the value of religion. One perceives that there is force in this reason; and in the present case it was fully justified

by the result. But how few ministers can act upon it! In how few societies, especially the smaller ones, are men to be found of that happy combination of qualities which fits them to be leaders in so difficult and delicate a service! How rare are those to whom the minister can safely delegate his responsibility for the instruction and character of his children! It is cause for congratulation that the number of such persons is multiplying; that more and more of our youth are becoming qualified to take the active and intelligent oversight of this great work. But it cannot yet be safely laid down as a general rule, that the minister shall have no personal share in the labor or responsibility. In Dr. Parker's society it was otherwise.* He was able to relieve himself from all solicitude respecting the duties of superintendence and instruction. He attended the meetings of the teachers, and visited and addressed the school quarterly; he never ceased to regard it with intense interest as one of the strong pillars of religion; it was not long before his death that he manifested that interest by securing for it a valuable legacy from a dying friend; but the actual management he left entirely to others, and that with as much gratitude for their services as confidence in them. "Were it in my power," he says, in an address delivered to them at their request, "I would express to you the sentiments with which I regard your exertions in the cause of Christ. But I will not obtrude on you my private feelings. Be assured of my warmest gratitude, and that I regard with the liveliest interest your pious and benevolent labors."

There was still needed another institution to complete Dr. Parker's plan of religious organization, and that was

* See a letter from Mr. Haven to Professor Ticknor, published in the volume of Mr. Haven's *Remains*.

founded in the year 1826. It was an association for mutual religious improvement. Here he collected from forty to fifty of the young and middle-aged men of the society, for the consideration and discussion of important questions in religion and morality. At each monthly meeting, a dissertation was read by one of the members, the subject of which then formed a theme for conversation. Dr. Parker entered into the design with great spirit, and imparted to it a strong interest by the manner in which he elucidated the questions which came before them. His custom was to give, at some length, his own views of a subject at the close of the evening, answering objections and clearing away obscurities, setting the truth on its strong foundations, and especially taking care to give it a bearing on moral duty and personal religion. These meetings are said to have been full of instruction and excitement. They roused many minds to exercise on high subjects of thought, and settled opinions on the basis of inquiry and reason; at the same time that they opened to many men a new power and new source of enjoyment in the practice of expressing their minds in conversation and writing.

By the several means of religious influence now described, instruction and impression were carried to every portion of the society; a principle of union and life was imparted to it. The members came to feel as members of one body, who had some concern with each other; not as pew-holders, going to a certain place to hear a sermon, and acknowledging no further connection with the house or the people, but as partners and portions of the community assembled there; caring for their fellow-worshipers and cared for by them; pleased to meet, and ready to serve each other in other places and at other times. One cannot doubt that he who addresses a congregation collected on this principle,

must preach with a heartiness and soul which he could feel under no other circumstances. If he be, as the head of a family, the personal friend of all, while all are the personal friends of himself and of the rest, he writes and speaks with another and more earnest feeling than he who addresses an assembly of unconnected individuals. There must be much of the same difference as between the case of a man who spends a day in the bosom of his trusting and affectionate family, and of him who spends it in a strange hotel, with persons accidentally brought together, who separate without caring to meet again. Christianity was intended to bring men together; its institutions are social and fraternal; its true and best work is done only when it has made men brothers, and given them a sympathizing interest in each other. Its work is hindered and thwarted, so far as they remain strangers and indifferent to each other. It is a crying evil in the structure of modern society, in the larger towns especially, that it opposes to so great an extent the proper union of Christian worshipers; that it collects together in the house of God, and at the Lord's table, men and women who know not each other, and then, instead of binding them together as members of one body, allows them to think it consistent with their profession that they continue strangers. This is far from what ought to be. It behoves Christians to exert themselves to counteract this social evil, and give proper scope to the great Christian relation. Until they do this, their religion will fail of fulfilling its tendency, will be kept back from its full action on the welfare of society. It is a thing which they may do. It cannot be attempted without partial success. Let any minister heartily undertake it, under some judicious system like that just described, and he will find himself so seconded by the desires of many souls and the native tendency of Christianity,

that he cannot wholly fail. Discouragements there may be for a time; but they will disappear before a resolute perseverance and the kindliness of human and Christian affection; and, when the work is accomplished, he will enjoy an unspeakable happiness in preaching the word and breaking the bread of life, no longer to an accidental assemblage, but to a band of brothers.

But the power of Dr. Parker's ministry was not solely owing to these various measures by which he brought religion to act upon men. Much was owing to his personal character. I referred to this when speaking of his attendance on the afflicted; I speak of it now, generally. It is evident, that in a state of society like that which exists in this country, the efficacy of religious institutions must essentially depend on the personal character of him who superintends them; especially when he lives alway in the presence of the people. To them he is the acting and imbodied representation of the religion which he teaches. His character is the interpreter of his preaching; it is the application of his doctrine; it is the standard by which men measure the length, and breadth, and depth of his principles. If he lived apart from them in mysterious and unvisited solitude, and was never seen except when he came forth from his hermitage, like some old prophet, with thrilling words from another world, his real character would be of little importance; for their imaginations would clothe him with any degree of sanctity. But he who walks among them in daily life, like other men, has no refuge from his indiscretions and faults in the fancies of the observers. He is exposed to scrutiny, and must submit to it. He must calculate on having all his instructions respecting virtue, humility, purity, and kindness, interpreted by the construction

which he himself, in his every-day life, seems to put upon them. As it was said to the French preacher, "Father, when I hear you speak, in the pulpit, respecting the severity of a religious life, my heart sinks with despair; but when I meet you in the world, my courage revives again," — so men are always more ready to follow the carelessness of a preacher's life than the sobriety of his precepts. On the other hand, he who can endure this strict ordeal of daily observation, and is seen to verify in his character the picture of goodness which he has drawn in his discourses, imparts a power and sacredness to his doctrine which no eloquence or genius could have bestowed. He is listened to with a reverence and trust which the highest oratory never commands.

Dr. Parker was one of those who could stand this severe trial. His virtues bore examination, and his foibles did not become greater on closer inspection. His perpetual living in the presence of men, so far from contradicting or weakening the power of his preaching, incalculably augmented its power by the fidelity with which his example seconded it; gave it a power, in fact, which those could hardly understand, who did not know the man. It was the illustration of his life which made his teaching what it was to his people.

It would be easy here to use the language of indiscriminate eulogy, and pass off some general outline of a Christian man for a description of the man before us. But if I rightly apprehend it, his character had some marked features; and it is by these that he will be most faithfully represented, and his life most truly explained. And I am inclined to think that the pervading characteristic — that which appeared always prominent and gave complexion to the whole — was what may be called *truthfulness*. He was

a TRUE man. In thought, heart, purpose, word, act, deportment, directly and indirectly, all was true. Nothing was designed, nothing done or said, for appearance sake, or through mere expediency. He exhibited himself so undisguisedly, with such straight-forwardness, that an observer would spontaneously say, "That is a man to be confided in." This it was, in connection with his clear-sighted good sense, which caused him to be trusted in the manner already alluded to. This led him to that open plainness of speech, amounting sometimes to bluntness, which has been spoken of. I cannot help suspecting, also, that from this originated that oddity or quaintness of expression which so much characterized his familiar conversation. Might it not have been at first employed as a cover to bold and unpalatable truths? Half sarcastic and half humorous, stingingly severe, yet jocose in expression, he was able to say, inoffensively, whatever he pleased, — his manner acted instead of a formal apology for plain-dealing. But whether so designed or not, or whether this peculiarity were the mere result of a sportive habit of mind, it certainly had the effect which I ascribe to it. Those who most keenly felt the censure, could feel no resentment; for there was evidently not only no ill-will, but the greatest kindness and good-humor in him who spoke it. "Every one who came within the sphere of his influence," a friend has truly said, "felt perfect confidence in his sincerity, which would not allow him to flatter his weakness or palliate his faults; and yet his kindness and benevolence were so apparent, that they knew his judgments would be lenient as well as just. I think there was in him a rare union of stern integrity, uncompromising detestation and scorn of all that was false and wrong, united with perfect kindness and the most tender sympathy with the imperfections of human nature."

His influence over men was therefore that of character. He did not strive for influence. He did not aim at power. It came to him. It belonged to him, as it does to every man of single-mindedness and trustworthiness. Men saw that he was what he appeared to be, and that his objects were what he professed; that he was not considering what would be expedient, — he had a contempt for those who belittle great intentions by asking whether it be *expedient* to labor for them; — he considered only right and duty. Therefore they felt that he was to be trusted.

There was another trait in his character which gave him influence. His friends remarked in him an uncommon knowledge of human nature, an intuitive perception of character, a singular and almost prophetic sagacity, by which he penetrated men's bosoms and discerned foibles or dispositions of which they were themselves scarcely aware. He evidently made man and human character his study; and having, as one expresses it, "a strong faith in the moral power and results of principles," he was accustomed to reason from the act to the motive, and from appearances to the reality, so as oftentimes to startle those with whom he conversed, by unveiling them, unawares, to themselves. This talent of observation extended to men's affairs as well as characters. It used to be a matter of wonder to his friends, how he should, without officious inquisitiveness or habits of worldly gossip, be yet so sagacious and familiar in secular concerns. An upright, trustworthy man, possessing such penetration into men and things, could not fail to possess influence. Then it is to be added, that he was accustomed to express himself on all subjects with perfect frankness and directness. If he must speak of sin, especially of the mean and base sins, he would use no palliating or softening expressions, nor take pains to hide the expres-

sion of indignation and contempt which burned upon his countenance. "A lie he would call a lie, and as such he would treat it, in all its forms and disguises; and if any thing human would make the heart of the deceiver quail, it was such a look as I have sometimes seen dart from his usually mild and benevolent face."* Finesse, management, manœuvring, cunning, in the conduct of any affairs, met his heartiest detestation. Of other sins he would speak with compassion, because, he said, he could conceive them to be occasioned by unexpected temptation, sudden passion, power of circumstances, faults of education; but this could have no palliation, — it was a deliberate plotting to do wrong, and to do it by deception.

Another leading characteristic was his disinterestedness. "He was the most disinterested person I ever knew," said one who knew him intimately for many years. "His time, his studies, his labors, his money, even his personal sufferings, seemed to be considered by him only as they might benefit others." His disregard to selfish considerations was apparent in his whole demeanor and course of life. It was seen in his giving time and thought to others, at seasons when disease and suffering might have excused him for thinking only of himself. As a preacher, it showed itself in his shrinking from commendation; he dreaded lest he might, perchance, be brought to mingle a regard to his own reputation with the feelings which he carried into the pulpit; and, as a pastor and friend, it showed itself in his habitual attention to the welfare of others. He could not even perceive it to be right to make savings from his little means as a provision for a future day. When entreated to be less generous to others, and spare something for himself, he replied,

* Mr. Foster's Address.

that he had not been convinced that he should do more good by that means than by spending now. In the same spirit was his saying, formerly quoted, — "My parish first, then my family." It was a pleasure to him sometimes to invite to his table some of the humble and poor, and share their gratification. "I will not ask," he would say, "those whom Mr. A. or Mr. B. might invite; they do not need my dinner. I will have those whom nobody invites." He pleased himself with getting out for these humble guests some choice wine which had been given him; and when reminded that they would not know the difference between that and what was inferior, he replied, "But I do."

During the night of the great fire, in 1814, and in the midst of the consternation of that awful season, as he was walking with a friend, they met a lady, retreating from the conflagration of her home. His friend immediately offered her an asylum. "No, no," said he; "she has friends, let her go to them; reserve your room for those who have none."

One remarkably cold Sunday, when the snow was driving violently before the wind, and few persons were able to reach the church, he laid aside the usual formal discourse, and, taking up the words, "Who can stand before his cold?" addressed to his hearers some striking extemporaneous remarks suggested by the season;* which he closed

* He was very fond of using occasions and seasons, and was happy in adapting himself to them. I may mention another instance. Having prepared for his vestry evening lecture on one occasion, he was called to the dying bed of a parishioner. He was present during the last struggle of life, and went directly thence to the lecture-room, where he put aside the preparation he had made, and took the text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." It is said that he was never more impressive.

with recommending, that, instead of coming to church in the afternoon, they should serve their great Benefactor by visiting and helping the suffering poor. He himself set the example by going out, in the face of the storm, to visit a poor solitary woman, at a distance from town.

At another time, having passed a restless night, when he could ill sleep for thinking of those whom he knew to be suffering from the severity of the season, he rose at an early hour, to go and take care for them. Returning late, he observed, with an air of great contentment, that such and such persons had got good fires, and such and such good breakfasts; "and now," said he, "we will have ours."

Anecdotes like these might be multiplied. They indicate the spirit of his life, — a habit of disinterested thoughtfulness for others.

These qualities of integrity and disinterestedness, as they have been described, received steadfastness, consistency, and strength, from the more peculiarly religious graces of faith and piety, which in him were always living and operating. The power of his religious convictions, their constant presence to his consciousness, coloring the thoughts which passed through his mind, the feelings which rose in his heart, the desires, wishes, purposes, and plans, of his whole being, was evident to all who were about him, and is strikingly displayed in his letters to his friends. They are the letters of a religious mind; not formally and professedly discussing religious topics, excepting on special occasions, but full of those incidental expressions and allusions which disclose unawares the habit and bias of the mind. They show that a thoughtful regard to the divine presence, an unreserved trust in Providence, an habitual reference to the highest principles and motives, and a sensibility to spiritual things as if visible realities, were a part of his very life, and

accompanied him like the life-blood of his body. They gave him the fortitude with which he bore the sufferings of his long disorder, and the cheerful equanimity with which he waited its trying vicissitudes, its certain progress, and its final approach toward death. It all illustrated his faith, and proved the power of his principles.

Such a man as this could not fail of leaving an impression on the society in which he labored. When God qualifies one of his servants with such gifts, and they are faithfully used, he certainly crowns them with a blessing. And I trust that I have explained, as I proposed, the secret of his efficiency by the description which I have attempted of his preaching, his pastoral life, his system of action, and his personal character. Take them all together, observe how each operated by itself, and then how they all wrought in conjunction, and there can be no mistake as to the causes of his success, so far as he was himself concerned. And I cannot conclude this survey better, than by saying, in the words of a friend who has written to me respecting him, that the contemplation of his example "may be as profitable for his brethren, as it would be for an agriculturist to visit a spot where he could see the best improvements in the cultivation of the soil carried into effect." It is for his brethren, especially for beginners in the ministry, that I have felt myself to be writing. No men are so likely to enter life with general and undefined purposes of usefulness as clergymen. No profession offers so vague a map of duty, and allows so wide a choice of means and measures, so extensive a range between activity and indolence. None, therefore, so much need specific direction from the experienced, and, what is yet better, some pattern of a well-arranged and efficient administration. Such a pattern may be found here. Let our young men study it; let them enter

thoughtfully into its spirit; let them tread devotedly and discreetly its paths; not slavishly, not minutely, but in the becoming temper of free minds, which own Christ for the only Master, but which yet love to learn of and imitate those who have worthily served him. They may then hope for satisfaction in their work, for they will see it prosper; and the church will rejoice in the brighter day of activity, piety, and peace, which will be growing up beneath their toil.

We must now turn our attention to his more public relations. At the time of his ordination, the division which had rent in twain the Congregational body of New England, had not been made. Ministers and churches held fellowship with each other on the broad ground of their common Christianity, and had not learned to refuse it on the narrow ground of their peculiar interpretations of some parts of Christianity. But the signs of the coming division had begun to show themselves; voices were already heard clamoring for it, and suspicion and hesitancy were beginning to mark the conduct of leading men. The two Congregational churches in Portsmouth had from time immemorial dwelt side by side in the interchange of the offices of Christian fellowship, though the standard of Orthodoxy had been higher in the one than in the other. Dr. Buckminster was now minister of the north parish, — a distinguished and respected name, exercising deserved influence over a large and flourishing congregation. Though aware of the extent in which Mr. Parker's opinions fell short of what he himself regarded as sound theology, he soon formed for him an affectionate attachment, and united with him in Christian and ministerial offices. They lived like father and son, mutually respecting and aiding each other. It was a beautiful instance of two

disciples merging their differences in their love for a common Master and for one another. In the infirmities which soon came upon the declining years of the elder, the younger was a trusted and confidential companion; and in the perplexities which attended the early ministry of the younger, the elder was a ready counsellor and aid. And when a zealous person, who doubted whether her new minister were sufficiently orthodox, inquired of Dr. Buckminster whether she ought not to forsake his ministry, he charged her not to do so, for that any one who should listen aright to Mr. Parker would find the way of salvation.

Dr. Buckminster died in 1812. Mr. Parker preached the sermon at his funeral, and in 1815 gave the right hand of fellowship at the ordination of his successor, the Rev. Israel W. Putnam. The customary intercourse continued between the ministers, notwithstanding that the growing controversies were producing and increasing the ruptures of ancient fellowship in every part of the country, until the year 1819. In the course of this year, Dr. Parker joined in the ordination of Mr. Sparks in Baltimore. This was seized upon as the occasion for suspending ministerial intercourse with him, and from that time he and his church were treated as heretic and excommunicate. Of course so important a change in the religious relations of two neighboring communities,—from ancient fellowship to sudden alienation, from mutual offices of faith and love to anathema on the one part and a sense of wrong on the other,—could not take place without the excitement of a good deal of feeling. Dr. Parker did not affect insensibility. It was a serious change in his own situation, as it abridged his opportunities of religious intercourse. But it altogether failed of affecting his influence as a minister, or of retarding the prosperity of his congregation. Though denounced as unworthy the

countenance of the Christian community, and separated from the church universal as far as human power could separate it, it yet continued to advance in numbers and repute; not by raising the banner of controversial war, and hurling back anathemas, but by carrying into more vigorous action those fundamental truths and practical principles which they had contended for as the common ground of Christianity. The adherence to these, in the spirit of love and good works, was every year more and more blessed. Those that were of the contrary part were ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them; and many even of the congregation which had disowned them became convinced that God was with them, and joined their fellowship; so that it was pithily said, "Individuals and families continue to migrate from the north, in hopes of finding a more congenial climate at the south." This climate they found; and there was evidence that beneath its benignant influences souls were ripening rapidly for heaven.

It is no small trial to the spirit, even in a land where the church has no secular power to enforce its decrees, to be stigmatized by a dominant party as an enemy to the Savior, and have one's name cast out as evil. But where the trial is borne with meekness and faith, it tends to purify and elevate the character, to confirm the allegiance to conscience, and to strengthen attachment to the holy truth for whose sake the obloquy is endured. Dr. Parker bore it thus, and there can be no doubt that he shared a blessing in the result. One of his friends remarked to me, that he thought he had perceived an evident progress, from this time, in the higher attributes of his Christian life. He seemed to feel a new responsibility when he found himself bearing the burden of a despised and rejected faith. He searched with new diligence into its foundations; he received new convictions

of its power and worth, pressed it more closely to his bosom, and exerted himself with new watchfulness in its defence; not, as I have already said, by contending, but by seeing to it, that on himself and on those committed to his charge it was permitted to exert its legitimate influences, and thus vindicate its divine power. When he attributed the increase of the parish, in his discourse on occasion of removing from the old meeting-house, "principally to the liberality of its members and their peaceable spirit," he uttered what was true, but not the whole truth. It was still more owing to the care which its minister took to maintain that peaceable spirit, and to make the truth lovely by its visible effects. The consequence of this prosperity was the erection of a more spacious place of worship, which was dedicated in February, 1826. Many persons at the time expressed an apprehension that the building was too large, and never could be filled with worshipers. But the event proved otherwise. It soon appeared that many souls were desiring precisely such an administration as was there offered them, and before his death it was completely occupied. He found himself in the spiritual charge of more than two hundred and ten families where he had begun with seventy.

We may advert, in a few words, to another change in his relations, occasioned by the circumstances of the times. In his early ministry, he had united himself to the Piscataqua Association of Ministers, and used to attend its pleasant meetings in company with Dr. Buckminster, who was observed "to go with more alacrity and increased spirits to the ministers' meetings, ordinations, &c., when his young friend could be his companion in the chaise." It might have been reasonably expected that that Association would stand up manfully for religious liberty, and be slow to admit the exclusive doctrines of the day; for in the year 1790 it

had adopted and recommended to the churches the following liberal sentiment: "That the profession which churches have a right to demand, is not an assent to any human creed, confession, or summary of Christian doctrine, but a general profession of faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and hope of the mercy of God through him, expressed either in words or writing, as the person offering himself may choose." But the enlarged spirit which had dictated this expression, seems to have departed with the good men of that milder day. Their successors became alarmed at the progress of liberty, and it was unavoidable that they should so conduct themselves toward a member of their body whom they knew to favor the heresies of the times, as to make him perceive that his presence at their meetings was irksome to them; and thus, without venturing on the obnoxious measure of a formal exclusion, to induce him voluntarily to withdraw.

But while thus cut off from the Christian fellowship of those of his own denomination, who fancied themselves sounder divines than he, it is pleasant to know that there were others, not of the same denomination, nor consenting to his distinguishing views, who yet lived with him on terms of cordial respect and affection. The clergyman of the Episcopal church in Portsmouth could not be alienated from a good man by the cry of heresy or any speculative differences of opinion. He treated Dr. Parker as a brother, and there was between them a sincere and confiding attachment which only death interrupted. During the severity of Dr. Parker's illness, when the approach of the cholera was apprehended at Portsmouth, a united season of fasting and prayer was held by the congregations of these two ministers; the services being conducted by Dr. Burroughs at his own church in the morning, and at the south Congregational church in the afternoon. That occasion is remembered

with deep feelings of satisfaction. It is gratifying to record this instance of a true Christian spirit manifested by good men, each conscientiously devoted to his own views, but able to look above them to the wider fields of truth and love.

There was still another body of clerical men, with whom he was connected, by virtue of his office as a Congregational minister, — viz., the Convention of Congregational Ministers in New Hampshire. This, from its very constitution, embracing, as it did, all the Congregational ministers in the state, was based on the broadest principles of Congregationalism; and therefore the excluding spirit of the times ought to have found no harbor within it. But it did not escape the general infection. For several years, consequently, Dr. Parker had absented himself from its meetings, and thus was totally cut off from all participation with former associates in the public fellowship of Christian life. But it happened that one of the last public acts of his life was connected with this very body of ministers. When his sinking health revived a little, a few months before his death, he made a journey of recreation, and, in the course of it, visited Concord. It was at the period of the anniversary celebrations, and as he saw, from the window of his lodging, the ministers repairing to the meeting of the Convention, he took up his hat, and said that he would step in once more, and see what they were doing. He found them engaged in a project for remodelling the Convention, and excluding from it the Unitarian members. He was struck with the impropriety of the scheme, and its inconsistency with genuine Congregational principles, and rose in his place to expose it. It was almost a voice from the dead, and could hardly have been more solemn, if it had issued from the sepulchre.

But while the disorders of the age deprived him of the

fellowship of those with whom he began life in more tranquil days, he had the satisfaction of seeing gathered near him a number of ministers with whom he could more fully sympathize. A new association was formed in the spirit of brotherly love, and mutual forbearance and aid. In this connection he enjoyed fully the communion of the saints, and was himself regarded as a member, whose light and counsel were always ready, and always valuable. He joined also, in the latter part of his life, in forming the Unitarian Association of New Hampshire, and lent to it the power of his name and influence, by consenting to be its first president. He was still as far as ever from all mere sectarianism; but he saw what the times demanded, and he probably, as his bodily strength decayed, and another world drew near, felt, with increasing force, the worth of those great principles on which his own trust and consolation rested.

Less of a sectarian no man could be, and yet no man was more decidedly attached to the opinions which he had embraced. I am not aware that there was any great peculiarity of sentiment by which he was distinguished from the great body of Unitarians; though in a community whose members are so wholly independent of each other, and make so little account of minor differences of faith, it is not easy to speak on this point with certainty. To their leading and favorite principles he was an independent practical adherent; he allowed perfect liberty of judgment and profession to all, and was willing to join all, of any name, in the promotion of a good cause. He cared for the prevalence of no doctrine, if it did not make men better Christians. His own words are these: "Believing, as I do, that religion is designed to make men good, I can rejoice in the success of no party any further than its success is connected with

the advancement of piety. Wherever I see the spirit of the gospel cherished and extended, I will rejoice, whatever sect may be employed in the work of doing good." Perfectly agreeable to this are certain principles, which, he says, he had prescribed to himself: "To unite with good men in doing good, — to endeavor to weaken no man's influence who appeared to be laboring in the cause of Christ, — not to multiply occasions of strife between Christians of different views, — to do all in his power to cherish kind affections among Christians, — to defend his character when any attempt should be made to cover it with suspicion, and this, as a means of preserving his usefulness in the world."

While he thus jealously watched for liberty and charity, his favorite and engrossing views were the practical views of religion. These, as was hinted when I spoke of his preaching, were severe, solemn, and strict, grounded on uncompromising views of the divine law, and on the gospel as a provision for sinners. His thoughts and representations of religion took their tone from this idea; and he had serious apprehensions of evil from what he supposed to be the tendency of the times to a lax and lenient administration of truth, — intellectual, refined, graceful, tasteful, and rhetorical, but not profound, earnest, spiritual. The controversies and divisions of the day on the one hand, aided by the increasing refinement of society on the other, seemed to him tending to this melancholy result, — to deprive the gospel of its nerve, and make preaching a holiday entertainment. "I cannot but entertain fears," he said, "that the public taste in our parishes is becoming too fastidious, too fond of mere novelties; of amusement in listening to preaching, rather than improvement. If it be so, our churches will decay, and the situation of clergymen become more and more deplorable. There can be no situation

more humiliating, than that of a minister who feels obliged to cater for a fastidious taste, who perceives that his standing with his people is made to depend upon amusing their fancy, not upon honest endeavors to save their souls."

In another passage he uttered forebodings on this subject, which have since begun to be extensively verified. "These are bad times for ministers. The whole moral atmosphere is in an unnatural state of commotion; the public taste is becoming more and more diseased. The time will come when brighter hopes will open on the church. I may not live to see them, but I will enjoy them in anticipation. In the mean time, ministers must feel and suffer the agitations which are going on, and which they have had a great hand in producing. They must labor, be reviled, be tossed from place to place, not knowing where they shall lay their heads, — if, peradventure, they can keep them sufficiently composed, to lay them for temporary repose any where. But great results are to be the fruit of severe labors and trials. We have no right either to complain or to despond. Duty is ours; events are God's."

He had great faith in the power, as well as in the truth, of his religious views. He was sure, as he well might be from his own experience, that they contain the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. But he did not conceal his anxiety, lest the causes which have been just referred to, and others of a less definable character, should create a want of simplicity and earnestness in preaching them. Upon this point he was accustomed to express himself strongly. "No sect can preserve its hold upon the public, which does not bring religion to the hearts of men, and connect itself strongly with their affections. No permanent bond of union can be formed between a people and a minister, unless it be strengthened by a deep conviction

that the minister either does them good, or earnestly labors for their good, as moral, religious, accountable, and immortal beings." He rejoiced heartily in all the measures that were taken for increasing the means of theological education. "We are in extreme want," he says, when writing on the subject, "of exertions to raise up rational preachers of the gospel." Ordinary, ill-appointed, half-educated men he looked upon as a serious impediment to the cause of truth, — feeling, as he once expressed himself in relation to a place in which he was interested, "If there must be a dunce or a drone at * * *, I prefer that he should be on the other side." When he saw in a minister any thing of the *petit-maître* and the selfish, he expressed himself in terms of still greater impatience. Not Cowper himself could exhibit a stronger abhorrence and contempt of such a character. If one had appeared to enter the ministry for the sake of its worldly respectability and ease; if he were mainly anxious to secure a reputation; if he seemed to be engaged in turning sentences, and contriving prettinesses, instead of dealing with plain and strong truths, — he did not disguise how much he was annoyed. He would urge the young men who occasionally preached for him, to discard all thought of what would be said of them, and all sensitive anxiety about the merit of their discourses. "Why do you not write a sermon," he would sometimes ask, "as you write a letter? Throw out your soul freely and warmly, without thinking of any thing else." "We must diminish our pride," he writes to a friend, "or rather, we must make our duty our rule, and obey its commands. Then we shall be satisfied with doing as well as we can, without bringing ourselves into comparison with others."

His own practice, in this respect, was in accordance with his principles. "I have brought my mind," he used to say,

"to be satisfied with doing the best I can." He studied to find his reward in this, and to repress all feverish solicitude about consequences and reputation. He was very reluctant to receive commendation of his preaching, and he thought it of ill effect to hearers to be in the habit of giving it. One said to him, that a recent sermon was very good, and he trusted had done him good. "It is of no consequence," he replied, "that I should know you think it was a good one, and not at all worth while for you to express a hope that it will do you good. Never allow yourself to waste your feelings on expressions of this sort, but go quietly home, and take care that it shall actually do you good."

In 1815, he married Miss Susan Pickering, daughter of the chief justice of New Hampshire, who, with one son, survives him. Their only other child died in early infancy. His habits and tastes fitted him peculiarly to enjoy and adorn domestic life. The strength of his affections, and his love of simple pleasures, imparted a zest to the tranquil delights of home; and, being himself always cheerful and happy, he cast a perpetual sunshine upon all within his dwelling. Having but one child, he enlarged his circle of love and usefulness by extending a father's care to two children of his wife's sister, whom he reared as his own. In education he acted on the principle that every one should be thrown upon his resources as much as possible, and made to depend on his own strength. "Young persons should not be spared, but made to toil hard; one cannot learn to lay a stone wall," he would say, "by piling up feathers." Not that he would refuse any reasonable aid: and it may be serviceable to others to mention a method, which he occasionally adopted, of giving useful advice and suggestions respecting temper and conduct; namely, by writing on a bit of paper some maxim or precept, or moral

remark, and laying it, silently, where it might be found by the person whom he desired to influence.

The degree of doctor in divinity was conferred upon him by Bowdoin College in the year 1820. He delivered the Dudleian Lecture at Harvard University in 1824.

About the year 1821, he began to be sensible to a difficulty in the upper part of his nostrils, which troubled his breathing, and gave a little impediment to his speech. For some time, it was but a slight inconvenience; but it gradually increased till it became the occasion of severe suffering, and threatened to put a stop to his power of public speaking. He was obliged to submit himself to the instruments of the surgeon, and undergo the painful process of having the polypus, which had grown up in that tender region, forcibly torn away. The annoyance was removed only to grow again, and it became necessary to repeat the operation again and again; until at length it was frequently a part of his preparation for the pulpit to "resort to the tormentors," as he expressed it, and violently to clear out "his offending member." Unwilling to trouble another with so disagreeable a task, he learned to ply the instruments with his own hand; he kept them by him in his study, and inflicted on himself the bloody torture whenever the progress of the disease called for it. Of course his general health was affected by sympathy with this local disorder.

He was early aware of the dangerous tendency of his disease. He looked, however, to its effect rather on his power of usefulness, than on the duration of his life. In August, 1829, he says, in reply to the inquiry of a friend, "I have indeed felt at times oppressed by the calamity which I am called to endure. I have found it to be afflictive, not so much on account of the actual pains which it has occasioned me, as on account of the paralytic influence

which it has exerted over all my faculties, oppressing me with the consciousness that I am poorly able to perform the duties of a responsible station, — one in which much good might be done. But my people are kind and charitable toward me, and I bless God for it; but I cannot but feel at times as if I ought to give place to a more efficient man. My duty in this thing is not quite plain to me; and this is oppressive; yet I feel no disposition to complain, and I hope that I do what I can to be useful." And then, after remarking that he had that day gained relief "by submitting to have his offending member pass through the hands of the surgeons," he adds, "Health I do not expect; comfortable existence I may, I trust, hope for, without either guilt or presumption."

In June of the next year, 1830, he left home for the benefit of his health, and visited the springs at Saratoga. He did not much enjoy travelling, and was ill at ease in places of public resort. "I try all I can," he says, "to think it good for me to be here; but I have often enjoyed more pleasure in visiting a poor widow for half an hour, than I have received from all the novelties here. I do not intend," he adds, "to visit every battle-ground in my way. I hope to have my attention awake to whatever expresses the goodness or the grandeur of God; the marring and polluting of his works by human passions and strife I cannot be anxious to note."

During this excursion, he made a brief visit at Worcester, where he had resided during the period of his preparation for the ministry. The changes which nearly thirty years had made affected him. "I notice some," he says, "who were kind to me when I commenced my active life, and their dispositions are unchanged. Many, indeed, are gone beyond my ken, and I have passed my boyish days; but yet

I see in the richness of nature's scenes, in the coming forward of new actors, in the general improvement of the aspect of things, and the appearance of happiness, that, though change is going on, God is not ceasing to be good, and that I have abundant cause to trust in him and to rejoice in him."

He derived little or no benefit from the journey. "My health, I think, is no better. Had I not been heretofore mistaken in my prophecies, I should think that this disease would soon terminate my labors as a minister. This is the care of God, and with him I cheerfully leave it." His life had now become one long disease. At times he enjoyed comparative relief, maintained at all times his cheerful appearance and manner, and attended to the duties of his office. But he perceived himself to be a broken and decaying man. "I hope I do not complain of my trial," he writes in March, 1831, "though I am often painfully reminded, that I occupy a place which ought to be filled by an active, vigorous mind, not by one that is drowsy and paralytic; but I trust in God that I shall not be permitted to hang heavily upon my friends, or to injure a good cause; that I shall know my duties, and have grace to perform them."

In the succeeding October, he wrote as follows: —

"For myself, though I am never accustomed to think that all things are against me, the few months past have not been to me without a due portion of trials. My health has not been good, often wretched; yet I have been enabled to pass, though heavily, through my accustomed routine of duty. I have never been so sensible of the oppressiveness of duty; and many a time I have sighed to be relieved of all public responsibilities, and to find, in some retired spot, a place where, with books, rural occupations, and such friends as might feel interested in my welfare, I might pass quietly my destined period here. But such a spot is not within my

reach, and I doubt not that it is best that it should be so. I am blessed with a most affectionate people, who seem not yet wearied with me. They might be greatly improved, but to *me* they seem to constitute one of the best of parishes. They are fast falling away from me; but as they sink into the grave, they increase my confidence in the religion which it is my privilege to preach, and connect my affections more strongly with God and the future. Among those who yet stand around me, I am rejoiced to notice a grateful attention to the one thing needful. In no year of my ministry have so many been added to the church as during the present; yet there is no feverish state of feeling; all is calm and considerate. At present, my health is better than usual, and I have the prospect of passing a comfortable winter. You will say I ought to be happy, and so, I trust, I am."

In the spring of 1832, his disorder took a new turn, extending itself to the lungs, and threatening serious disease in that organ. He was obliged to relinquish preaching, and in August he visited the Isle of Shoals, for the benefit of the air and retirement. Secluded and barren as was this retreat, he found it not destitute of hints for devout thought. "The islands are indeed desolate," he writes, "but even here, God is not leaving himself without witnesses of his goodness. * * * He who is spreading so widely his goodness, is appointing my trial; it must, therefore, be for good." The thought of the kindness of his friends mingled with his sense of the goodness of God, while he mused and prayed in that lonely retirement, and strongly affected him. "The recollection of the many and persevering kindnesses of my friends, though it is precious to me, often entirely overcomes me." And again, in another letter: "My friends have been abundant in their kindness, and among

them you are entitled to more thanks than I can express — thanks, not merely for the wishes expressed for my personal welfare, during a season of trials, but for years of most exemplary assistance, in promoting the spiritual interests of my people, which are far more dear to me than the poor remnants of a life, which, at furthest, must soon close. I beg you to remember me most affectionately to all my friends, and to assure them that I am not insensible to their kindness. While I think of their goodness to me, I cannot but carry up my thoughts to the Inspirer of all goodness. He has been very merciful to me; and I cannot be too thankful that he has preserved my mind from gloomy distrust, and kept cheerful images before it. I cheerfully commit all to him; myself, my dear friends, all, I commit to him."

After returning from the Isle of Shoals, he visited Boston for the purpose of consulting the distinguished physicians of that city, and returned home somewhat encouraged respecting the prospect of continued life. It was at this time that he wrote to a friend in the following strain: "The prospect that my disease will soon come to a fatal issue, I do not consider so certain as I once did. It seems to me more probable, that I may be called to pass years of infirmity and uselessness; and I must confess that the anticipation is far more painful to me than that of a speedy death. But I will not distrust that merciful Being who has hitherto sustained me, nor the consolations which are in Christ Jesus. In my sickness I have been wonderfully supported; my mind has been preserved in great serenity, and my religious trust has not been for a moment shaken. Though there is at times a degree of fearfulness, when I look forward to the future trials which may await me, yet I am not cast down in the anticipation of them, but stay myself on

the promises of God, and submit myself to his disposal. All will be well, I doubt not."

At this time many of his friends were urgent that he should try the effect of a warmer climate, and begged permission to bear the expenses of his winter's residence in Cuba. But he said, "I cannot be convinced that it is my duty to leave home; and, at the risk of being thought unreasonable and obstinate, I shall remain among my friends." He accordingly passed the season in Portsmouth, but in such a state of weakness that, in March, he writes, "I have been into the street but twice since the middle of December, and then only to take a short ride." In May, he speaks of his health as "surprisingly and unexpectedly improved;" and for a few Sundays he was able to preach; but it was a transient revival. The summer passed away, and he gained nothing; and in September he writes, "It seems to me that I have not long to remain here; and I have a perfect confidence that I shall not be deserted; that all things will be well." This was the last letter which he wrote.

It was now for many months that he had been unable to discharge any public duty, excepting a few days in the spring, and that others had taken his place in the pulpit. To live useless had always been his dread; a burden to his friends and parish he had always resolved not to be. During, therefore, this long trial of languor and helplessness, his feelings had been exercised with no light struggle on the question whether he ought not to resign his ministry, and relieve his flock from the burden of his support. He felt that they could not bear the expense of two ministers, and he was unwilling to stand in the way of their obtaining a pastor with the health and efficiency which he had lost. The parish, on the other hand, clinging to him with devoted

gratitude and respect, could not think of a separation so long as his life should remain. They were anxious to give him every indulgence in their power, and to make that provision which should set his mind at ease. With this view, they determined to provide a colleague, who might divide with him the labors of the ministry; and having been so happy as to secure the services of Mr. Andrew P. Peabody, the 24th day of October was appointed for his ordination. But the days of the sufferer were numbered; and in vain did gratitude, friendship, and piety, prepare this alleviation for his cares. He lived to see the day which gave him a colleague; he saw the people that he loved, united under the charge of one whom they could trust; but as if the heart, which, for twenty-five years, had beat only in their service, could beat no longer when that service was thought to be no longer needed, he rapidly declined from this time; a new disease set in, and the hour of his departure drew nigh.

For many days there was nothing alarming in the affection from which he suffered, and it was supposed that his constitution would rally again, as it had done before. But on the morning of Wednesday, November 6, he intimated to his physician, that he felt his end approaching, and every hour rendered it more evident. In the midst of great suffering, so great that he spoke of it as "intense agony," he made the few necessary arrangements of his worldly affairs, and continued from this time without relief from bodily distress, but in great quietness, and even cheerfulness of spirit, until two o'clock, Friday morning, when he ceased to breathe.

It would be easy to say much respecting the manner in which he had borne the long trial of his disease, and of the state and expression of his mind in the near approach of death. It was all worthy of the religion which he had

preached, and a testimony to its power. It was all, at the same time, in perfect accordance with his own character; so that the same traits displayed themselves during debility and suffering, which had marked him in health and action. What was observed of him by a friend who was with him during the last few days of his life, was true of his whole illness; "all was natural, all was himself, his every-day self; yet there was a dignity and solemnity which was *felt*, if it was not seen by the common eye." This was in perfect accordance with the principles which had always governed him. He once said, when asked what he should do, if he were certain of dying in three or four days, — "Just what I am doing now, and intend to do to-morrow." And it was remarked by a friend, who saw him much during the days when he was actually waiting for death, that he was still doing the ordinary duty of every hour as it arrived, and interesting himself in the immediate gratification of his friends, as he would have done, if sure of a long life. But of formal declarations respecting his state of mind and feelings, he had as little now as when in health. What he said was incidental, "so that it is only by retracing general conversations, that any thing can be recalled." His soul betrayed itself in the demeanor rather than by the lips. When, however, some of his friends, with the desire, so natural to us, to learn from one's own testimony what is passing within, spoke to him on the subject, he answered them with his own frankness. About a week before his death, when several were sitting by him, one of them asked him whether he experienced the power of his faith as he had expected to do. He answered with emphasis, "I trust that I do." And in further conversation, though speaking with the greatest difficulty, he expressed the undisturbed serenity of mind which he enjoyed, and the confidence of his reli-

gious hope; adding, that if it were ever clouded for a moment, he had but to remind himself of the goodness of God, and all was bright again. He often said to one of his friends, "I have never felt myself forsaken for a moment, and I have no fear that I shall not be supported to the last." Any attempt to give him support by words of commendation he could ill bear. It was natural that his friends, in their desire to express what they felt toward him to whom they owed so much, should sometimes use strong language. He listened to it very impatiently, saying, "Do not call me good; I know my imperfections as no one else can." When it was replied, that he ought not to depreciate himself, he answered, that he certainly did not intend to do that; that he had the comfort of believing he had done some good, he thanked God for it, and desired that the glory might be given to him. With the same mixture of honesty and humility, he replied to the remark, that he had always endeavored to promote the happiness of those around him, "So far as I have had *distinct purposes*, it may be so."

Some idea of the manner in which he endured his sufferings, may be derived from the following extract of a letter: —

"I have often been with Dr. Parker, when he was suffering the severest distress; and though it was almost beyond endurance even to be with him and witness his distress, he nevertheless remained as calm and cheerful as though nothing whatever was the matter. If any thing was said, he would always, even while coughing so that it seemed almost as if his lungs must be torn in pieces, endeavor to put in a remark, though it might be only a word between each breath; and when too much exhausted for utterance, he would still turn upon you with a most sweet smile.

"I never saw him cast down but once; and that was the first Sunday in the year, a day which had always been one

of unusual interest to him, on account of the review which he had been accustomed to make on that day of the concerns of the church and parish of the preceding year, and the opportunity it afforded him of appealing forcibly to the consciences of his people, and producing a religious impression. It was the first time since his settlement that he had been deprived of the privilege of addressing his people on this occasion, and he felt it very sensibly. I went in to see him after the afternoon service, and was struck with the appearance of sadness on his countenance. I had been often before urging him to allow his friends to sit up with him at night; and I introduced the subject again. After I had pressed the matter considerably, setting aside all his objections, he at last came out with what, I doubt not, was that which weighed most deeply on his mind — 'He did not think it right to make other people suffer on his account.' 'Why, sir,' said I, 'your people would rejoice to be permitted the privilege of sitting with you; and if you will only give the word, I venture to say, there are fifty who stand ready to offer to-night.' His heart was already full; but the remembrance of his people's love was too much for him, and he leaned his face on his hand and wept. — Excuse me, my dear sir, for running out to this length; but it is a subject on which those who have seen much of Dr. Parker are not apt to say only a word or two." *

* Other particulars are recorded in the *Address to the Pupils of the South Parish Sunday School*, the Sabbath after his interment; and in the *Memoirs* of his life, published in the *Christian Examiner*, March, 1834, and in the *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, vol. iv. — It will be observed that in no instances have I enclosed in quotation marks the language attributed to Dr. Parker, excepting I was sure of the *very words*. Most of the citations are from his letters.

In this manner did he pass through his wearisome disease, and thus in faith and patience did he meet the hour of dissolution. He had lived as a Christian should live, and he died as a Christian should die. Devout men attended him to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. His body lies in that retired and beautiful spot, which he had lately done much to cause to be consecrated as a place of sepulture; and thither many have gone to ponder and weep, while they rejoiced in the lofty trust, and glad faith, which assured them that his spirit was among the blessed. A durable monument of stone has been erected to tell the place where his dust reposes; but a better memorial is to be found in the volume which contains the records of his teaching. Better than epitaph or eulogy, it will describe him to those who knew him not, and will restore him to the memory and heart of those who knew and loved him.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE INTERMENT OF

THE

REV. THOMAS PRENTISS,

MINISTER OF THE SECOND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN CHARLESTOWN;

WHO DIED OCTOBER 5, 1817,

IN THE 25TH YEAR OF HIS AGE.

"We took sweet counsel together, and went to the house of God in company."

SERMON.

JOB XIV. 2.

"HE COMETH FORTH AS A FLOWER, AND IS CUT DOWN: HE FLEETH ALSO AS A SHADOW, AND CONTINUETH NOT."

How often, my hearers, is this verified before us! How frequently are we made to feel, by the melancholy events we witness, that the strong language of Scripture respecting the frailty of man, and the uncertainty of life, is not the mere language of imagination or the exaggeration of poetry, but the expression of simple fact. When we see, as we do now, the flower actually cut down, and the past vanished like a shadow, and fled like a dream, we are convinced that the images of holy writ are images of truth; that life is indeed a vapor, short as a watch in the night, swifter than the weaver's shuttle. The joyous aspect of the world we move in would make us forget it; the eager pursuit of business, the allurements of pleasure, the bustle, and the cares, and the thoughtless joys of existence, would crowd it from our minds; would make us believe that we have a strong hold upon life, a sure and abiding heritage. The miseries and afflictions of our fellow-men might, indeed, teach us differently; but, alas! how slight is the impression made by misfortunes which do not reach ourselves, and how soon worn away! The clouds which hang over the prosperity of others cast no shadow of their gloom upon us. The

knell has been so often heard, that it strikes upon unheeding ears, and has ceased to remind us of our own liability to evil. The affliction must come to our own circle — it must reach our near friends — it must touch ourselves; then only is the impression deep and lasting; then only are we, in any proper sense, *believers* in the short-lived nature of earthly good; then only are we ready *to act* in the conviction that all things are frail, and nothing permanent; that the delights of life are perishing, and life itself transitory; then, in the bitter anguish of bereavement, we exclaim, Vanity of vanities, all is vanity; man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble; born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; verily, at his best estate, he is altogether vanity; verily, there is nothing to which we can trust without fear of loss, nothing we can hope without fear of disappointment. Our pleasures fade at the touch; our morning schemes are frustrated before noon; and the friends who partook of our cheerfulness and hopes in the evening, are chilled by "the icy wind of death," before another morning. The day to which we have looked for gladness has often brought with it distress and troubles the most bitter and severe; and even the hopes which had their foundation in *religion* — the most virtuous designs of laboring for His glory who formed us, and the best good of our fellow-mortals — are cut off in their very infancy; and we see those, whom we might have supposed the great Father would delight to continue, that they might benefit and improve his children, snatched from the midst of duties they loved, and the good they were anxious to perform.

And we ask, Why are all things thus? Why thus frail, uncertain, and changing? Why is it that man must come forth as a flower, and be cut down — a flower exposed to blighting when it opens its earliest leaves, rarely suffered to expand to

its fulness, or fall by a regular and late decay? Why has the Almighty Parent ordained that the bright visions of happiness which we constantly see, and are doubtless capable of enjoying, should so often elude us as we attempt to grasp them; that our best-directed efforts for good should be so often baffled; that misfortunes should disconcert our best-laid schemes, and disappointment mock our most virtuous hopes?

For an answer to such questions, we go to religion; and there the mind may find something to restore its tranquillity. Surely it is better that the good should be removed to a happier place, than that they should remain here forever; and since the removal occasions so much suffering, it is surely better that it should not be foreseen. The future is uncertain, because concealed; and we certainly should not wish to change that admirable provision of divine wisdom, by which it is concealed. For it is the eager pressing forward to what is yet uncertain and yet to be revealed, which gives so much animation, vivacity, and variety to life. And it is our blindness to the afflictions in reserve that enables us to meet and bear their distress without utterly sinking. How more than doubly wretched would be our lives, if we must foresee the pains and calamities awaiting us, without the ability to shun them, and be compelled slowly to approach them, shuddering with the full knowledge of their horrors, and repeating, many times in the anticipation, all the agony of the reality!

But here we are brought back to the question, Why any changes at all in our lot? Why is not the course of life unbroken by suffering, and not liable to be cut short by death? The question must be answered by the faith of Christianity, which tells us of the purposes of the perfect government of God, and of the infinite value of the future world. If we have

laid aside this faith in God and the Savior, then indeed we may ask and find no answer; then there is no balm for affliction; the hour of sorrow must be an hour of despair, — of darkness without any light at all. There are evils in the world, for which there is no sufficient remedy except that of religion; and the heart which cannot rest itself upon the anchor of immortality which God has provided will then sink without a stay, unconsoled and unconsolable. But with this, the uncertainty of happiness and of life may be borne with equanimity. For if God will assuredly bring good out of evil, what can it matter if we see it now, or only hereafter? If this be not our home, what can it matter if we be here for a longer or a shorter period? Compared to the whole of our being, the longest earthly existence is a trifle; and the sufferings we endure in this perishing house may be forgotten, or at least alleviated, in thinking of the happiness of our sure abiding-place.

Further, if we will look at the object of our present life, we shall acknowledge at once both the wisdom and mercy of this appointment. It is of importance ever to remember, that this is a state of preparation for a future world. But when life goes smoothly, we are sufficiently prone to forget it even in the present constitution of things. A short season of prosperity endangers our virtue, and is often too much for our piety. Even now, we see the great preparation deferred from time to time; the *hope* of life is sufficient to lull anxiety about its issue, and beget carelessness in duty. If, therefore, seventy years were our portion, and that portion uninterrupted by changes, how fatal would be the temptation to put aside the solemn business of religion, and drive from the mind the recollection of another state! How few would then devote their early days to virtue and to God, when they would be certain of time enough for

reformation, and when it would be quite as well to defer the business of repentance and piety till the relish for temporal enjoyment should be past, and their tottering limbs had borne them within sight of the tomb! Thus the uncertainty stamped upon all things, serves as a gracious warning against the seductions of sin, and prevents the circumstances of our trial from being too hard for us. We should acquiesce cheerfully in an appointment which has called back from the path of destruction so many wanderers; has restored so many, that were nigh being lost, to usefulness and reputation; has so often turned the balance between God and the world, and given to the church of Christ so many, who might otherwise have gone to their final destination thoughtless, if not vicious.

We are then permitted, my hearers, to see something of the wisdom and mercy of this system of change, uncertainty, and disappointment. And therefore, whatever severity of affliction it may now or at any time occasion, whatever hope it may destroy, God forbid that we should indulge in murmuring; for we know it to be part of the great plan of Infinite Wisdom, in its whole tendency infinitely good. And so long as we have that blessed gospel, which reveals, from our Father, that the darkness of the present is connected with the brightness of the future, we may feel assured, that the vicissitude of temporal things, and the overthrow of present expectations, are salutary parts of the discipline which prepares us for final happiness; and, having this assurance, we may, in some measure at least, "rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of our salvation." So long as God hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, we may smile in the midst of grief, and feel that there is one hope, at least, which shall not disappoint us.

The occasion of our meeting is such, that it was not

easy to avoid these reflections. They are the train of thought into which the mind naturally runs. The feelings of this people, and of these friends to-day, are those of disappointed hope; hope bitterly disappointed. Their hearts have sickened at the sudden overclouding of bright prospects, and the premature closing of labors whose benefits they had thought to reap for many years. The spirits of none of us have yet recovered from the shock they felt, when we first learned that so young a man, just entering the career of active usefulness in society, and the interesting duties of the Christian ministry, upon whom the affections of so large a circle were resting, and to whom so many souls were looking as to a guide in their dearest interests, had been taken, almost without warning, from the place that he loved. A dreary void is left, where his presence was so much valued, and so many hearts were warmed by his services. When we, therefore, pay our last tribute to his remains, can it be without sad meditation on the uncertainty of earthly good? It is but six short months since we assembled here to welcome him to his labors, and with joyful hearts pray for his life and prosperity. And now that on the same spot we see the end of that day's solicitude, can we forget how mournfully we have been disappointed? We saw him planted here in the court of our God, verdant and flourishing, a plant on which was a rich promise of fruitfulness. The wind passed over, and he is gone. Thus doth God destroy the hope of man; thus doth he warn us that our work may be already accomplished, when we imagine it just commencing.

The value of our friend's services, as well as the real worth of his character, is best known to you, with whom he spent the few last months of his life. To you his memory is deservedly dear; for he was all that you could ask of

Heaven in a faithful and affectionate pastor. But of his previous history there is little to be said. His life has been tranquil and void of incident, as it has been short; uninterrupted, except by the usual vicissitudes of human lot, and with few changes, but such as are common to man. He was the son of a clergyman, whose memory is honored as that of a sincere, able, and pious minister, distinguished among his brethren, faithful to his people, and beloved in the circle of his friends. Under him, in the silent and gradual progress of education, our friend acquired his knowledge and love of our holy religion. The impressions received in childhood appear never to have faded from his mind; and they gradually formed his dispositions for the sacred work in which he finally engaged. After the usual preparation, he pursued his education at our university, and received its honors in the year 1811. While there, he maintained a respectable character, and passed through its various scenes of temptation, not only free from vice, but exempt even from many of the follies in which youth are prone to indulge. His religion appears to have always constituted part of his character; and it doubtless was what restrained him from treading the borders of that forbidden ground, where many would have thought themselves safe, and preserved him from the shame and remorse which are the consequences of even thoughtless sins, when the sinner is repentant.

If such were the influence of religion upon himself, it is not strange that he should be willing to devote his talents and acquirements to its service, and desire to extend its influence over others. He accordingly commenced his preparation for the ministry within a year after completing his academic course. He preached with great acceptance in many of our churches; and in the month of February last,

he received a cordial and very gratifying invitation to settle as pastor of this church, having also, about the same time, been called to the charge of another church in this vicinity. The short interval that has since elapsed has proved that he was not unworthy of the confidence thus expressed toward him. He has been active in the duties of his office; interested and diligent in his public services; attentive and affectionate in the pastoral cares; and has received, in rather uncommon measure, the return of esteem and love from his people. They were his earthly reward; but it was not the will of his Father that he should enjoy them long. By a short and sudden illness, he has called him to his home — an illness the more distressing, as it affected the powers of his understanding, and kept him bewildered in delirium. Yet in the intervals of reason, he felt conscious that his end was approaching, and collected his spirit to meet it with resignation and faith — resignation and faith, which have such power over the soul in its darkness; and which, having sustained his spirit in its flight, must now come to the bosoms of the survivors, to make them firm in the Lord, and the hope of his glory.

The character of our departed friend was such as became a Christian. He was a diligent man; a benevolent man; a pious man. Without possessing uncommon powers of mind, or those extraordinary attainments in learning which strike us with astonishment, he had those faculties, and had made those acquirements, which fitted him with more certainty for usefulness in the station he was to fill. He had a sound mind, a careful judgment, and an entire freedom from that precipitancy, either in judging or acting, which is sometimes ruinous to the best intentions. Perhaps the quality of Christian prudence was his in particular perfection, which made him to be one in whom you could altogether

confide, and who would never disappoint you by doing any thing wrong or ill-judged. With this, he made a conscience of his duties, public and private; performing them at once from the love of them, and from their being the work appointed him by Providence. I cannot, in short, say any thing better of him, than that I believe he had the true spirit of the Christian ministry, and would have been a blessing in this place by his fidelity and activity, if it had pleased God that he should grow old in it. I think I knew him well; and there were in him qualities of goodness, and promises for the future, which could only be discovered to those with whom he was intimate; for he had a thorough dislike of all the parade and pretence of goodness.

Of the characteristics of his religion it is sufficient to say, he was a practical Christian, and valued practical Christianity more than speculative. Yet he inquired after truth with independence of mind, and held his opinions with modest firmness, as accountable only to God. But he was no bigot; and, thinking that a minister of the Lord Jesus has more important duties than to engage the minds of common men in doubts and disputes upon speculative questions, he had determined to speak of them but seldom; and to make them give place, both in his public and private teaching, to the principles which may be applied in common life, and operate on the heart and conscience. He doubted not that, if he could promote among his people love to God and love to men, the whole law would be fulfilled by them, and he should accomplish the design of his commission, as herald of the gospel salvation. With this object he commenced his labors; and to this end, no doubt, he would have continued to labor. But he was not permitted. Providence will give his labors to other instruments; and, though the church is in mourning, and friend-

ship may lament, yet it is God who has removed him — we trust to higher employments.

We mourn over the hopes which by this event are cut off. I do not say *his* hopes; for although he, doubtless, had those which were near and precious, yet his chief and final hopes were in the world to which he has gone; and we doubt not he has gone to enjoy them. But there are hearts bleeding because he is torn from them; which will long and deeply lament the exemplary son, the affectionate brother, the faithful friend. We do not intrude upon their grief; for while the heart is full, there is no sympathy like that of silence. We only say, Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, and ye also believe in Christ; the providence of God, and the gospel of Jesus, are full sources of consolation; and while they are full, ye may not sorrow as those without hope.

With the brethren of the church and society we sincerely sympathize. We know with what feelings you must contemplate the close of your fond anticipations, this mournful change of the joy with which you rejoiced in a pastor, in all respects fulfilling your wishes, and with a character suited to your circumstances, as if expressly formed for them by Providence. Short, indeed, has been the period of your union; and we look back upon it as upon a dream. Little did I think, when I stood in this place to express to our departed brother the fellowship of the churches, and to congratulate you and him upon an event so deeply and permanently to affect your religious interests, that I should so soon return to speak the last farewell over his remains. O, where is the gladness of that hour! Where is the warmth of the hand which then pressed mine, and of the heart which opened to our expressions of Christian good-will! And when we have since met together, and

conversed of our plans for the prosperity of the churches, and the good of our fellow-men, little indeed could we think that the one would be so soon taken from these schemes of the future, and the other left, weeping over his ashes, to pursue them alone. But such is the will of God — blessed that he gave him to us, and no less blessed, we devoutly believe, that he has taken him to himself. Blessed be his name, that, although he cannot return to us, we, my brethren, may go to him; and if you valued his services, I doubt not you will be anxious to prepare for a renewal of your connection with him. If you would show your respect for his memory, live as he would have urged you to live; imitate all that you saw good in him; slight not the loud warning which speaks from his tomb; and above all, make that gospel, whose worth he has pressed upon you, your perpetual study and guide. "The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth; but the word of the Lord endureth forever." And this is the word which he hath preached unto you.

To my fathers and brethren in the ministry, I will say, only, we have reason to mourn the unexpected breach which God has made in our number. We mourn this young friend and assistant, because we have seen, in what he was, the promise of what he would have been; and because we remember the fearful rapidity with which death makes its inroads upon our circle. We were watching with anxious hearts the progress of disease in our brethren at a distance, and little imagined we should first mourn here. What a shifting circle is ours! How multiplied the warnings of our frailty! How many our calls to devotion, to watchfulness, to zeal! We seem to stand among the earliest exposed to be called to their account, and must, therefore, stand prepared. God best knows when the labors he has appointed are accomplished; and, blessed be his name, he has made them no

less full of satisfaction than of anxiety; while at the end of the course is laid up a crown of life and of righteousness for all who have kept the faith, and fought the good fight, and love his appearing. O that we might indeed be found watching, since all on this side the grave is so fleeting, and all beyond so glorious!

To the assembled congregation I would say, You have come up hither to behold the end of man, and witness the close of human expectations. *There* is all that remains of youth, and health, and talents, and virtue, and the strong wish to do good. Will you go away, and learn no lesson, receive no warning? Will you go back to your business and your pleasures without casting one thought forward to your own dissolution, or suffering yourselves to be made serious by the recollection that you, too, are mortal? and that, while the shafts of death are flying so thickly around you, you may be removed as unexpectedly? Do not forget all that you know of the uncertainty of this world, and the everlasting importance of that which is to come. Remember that life is a season, not of pleasure, but of preparation; a short season; an uncertain season; that *religion* — to be attended to *here* — is the passport to felicity hereafter. O that you were wise — that you would understand this — that you would consider your latter end!

SOBER THOUGHTS

ON THE

STATE OF THE TIMES,

ADDRESSED TO THE

UNITARIAN COMMUNITY,

1835.

SOBER THOUGHTS

ON THE

STATE OF THE TIMES.

TWENTY years of controversy have just passed by. It has been a season, we may suppose, much like that of all controversies; but it has had its own characteristics, and, what is worthy of special observation, it is likely to be followed by more distinct and lasting results than generally happens. A theological discussion of great severity is oftentimes carried on for years, and yet it would be difficult to trace its consequences any where, excepting in the books which have been written, and which are themselves soon forgotten. But in the present instance, a broad mark has been left upon the very face of society; a permanent change has been effected in some of its institutions, and in the relations of its members. For it has been one of that series of struggles for liberty and light, which began at the opening of the Reformation in Germany, three hundred years ago, and which is pushing on step by step toward the completion of that immortal work. Society advances in opinion, in knowledge, in institutions, by some great effort of its powerful minds, and then pauses for a time, as if to secure and consolidate what is gained. Then another effort, agitation and advancement, and again another pause. During these

pauses it may seem stationary; it may even appear to the apprehensive mind retrograde; but it is certainly true that revolutions do not go backward; and though the tide of improvement, as it rolls up its glorious waves, may appear to be occasionally retreating, it is only to gather up its might, and come on with a firmer swell; while Dame Partington and all her maids brandish their ancient mops in vain.

It is the rolling in upon the shore of one of these larger swells that has attracted our attention during the last twenty years. The Reformation has been making a vigorous advance. The commotion has been extensive, the tossing has been fearful, the alarm and bustle of those exposed to the spray have been loud and earnest. At length the height of the swell seems to have passed. There are symptoms of greater quiet and repose. To change the figure, the heat of the warfare is over; the great battle has been fought; and it is time to look about us, and see what is the result, where the world stands, and what use is to be made of the losses and the acquisitions of the contest. I know no more instructive inquiry to the impartial seeker of truth. Who will undertake the investigation? Perhaps the day for it is not yet fully come: in order to a satisfactory decision, we must perhaps wait for the termination of several most interesting discussions in various unconnected portions of the Christian church, which are now in fervent progress, — all of them growing out of the great action of the principles of the Reformation, all a part of the mighty struggle of the times for liberty and light, all portending salutary change throughout the religious world, and giving to the thoughtful observer auspicious pledges of the sure advent of a day of complete and established reform. "Let the people praise thee, O Lord! let all the people praise thee!"

It is no part of my design to look at the whole of this

most extensive subject. I confine myself to that division of the church which has stood in the front rank during the recent contest, which has carried farthest the principles of the Reformation, and has consequently suffered (as the leading corps in this cause have always done) from the suspicions, the opposition, and the anathema of the general body of the believers. The majority of those who have reformed to a certain extent has always been seriously inimical to those who desire to reform further. "They have come to a period in religion," to quote the significant expression of the immortal Robinson, and they call it Orthodoxy. To go a step farther, and read the next sentence, is heresy, and heretics, of course, are not to be tolerated. This intolerable class, at the present age, is that of Unitarians. They are desiring to press the Reformation beyond the orthodoxy of the present times, just as the Puritans desired to press it beyond the orthodoxy of the English church, and are therefore to be regarded and treated no better than those unfortunate schismatics were treated by the powerful sects around them. Happily, indeed, no *secular* persecution is possible in these days; but doubtless the wicked Puritans of King James's time were not worse, in the eyes of the monarch and the church, than the wicked Unitarians now are in the view of the leading powers in church and state.

The recent controversy has been, not simply a discussion of opinions, but a contest for rights; it has involved questions of reputation for piety, claim to the Christian name, and, in some instances, questions of property. It has been the cause of various trying changes in the domestic and social relations; it has rent asunder long-united communities; it has touched, in all parts of the land, and sometimes with a most ungentle hand, many of the tenderest interests and charities of life. With so many circumstances and occa-

sions of exasperation, is it strange that it sometimes, on both sides, took an unhappy tone of bitterness and recrimination? Are we to wonder, when the excited disputant sat down to his task of argument or defence, and remembered that not only his most sacred opinions were to be shielded, but that momentous results of immediate, tangible good and ill, happiness and wretchedness, were at stake, — are we to wonder that he sometimes spoke too warmly, accused too fiercely, answered too indignantly, and was over-valiant in the use of provoking and irritating missiles? There is much of this to be lamented and forgiven on both sides. Must I not add, there were some specimens of debate so coarse, so insulting, so unprincipled, so after the school of the great calumniator, rather than that of Christ, that the writers themselves can look back upon them only with astonishment and abhorrence? We had been accustomed to plume ourselves on the decency and politeness of the age. We had quoted the base vulgarities of Luther and Calvin, as the strange ill manners of a semi-barbarous century, impossible to be permitted in the more decorous intercourse of modern society. Alas! we were made bitterly to know that no refinement of the age can prevent the atrocities of speech by which a malignant and exasperated bully delights to vent his own depravity of heart, and flatters himself that men will call it zeal. Let such things be forgiven; but let a mark of reprobation be put on them; let them be hung up in conspicuous places, as a warning to those who shall be called to the next contest, that it is required of a man that he *contend lawfully*, and put away from him *all bitterness, clamor, wrath, evil-speaking, and malice.*

Yet, upon the whole, there is much upon which the mind may look back with satisfaction and devout gratitude. Those to whom I write will not fail to recognize the hand

of a wise and gracious Providence in much of the fiery trial through which they have been called to pass. "If the Lord had not been on our side when men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth." We have much to be thankful for, in the manner in which the discussion, on the whole, was conducted; for the vigor, manliness, strength, and sobriety, — for the fairness, seriousness, love of truth, and spirit of piety, by which it was sustained and imbued; and for the lofty eloquence of faith, and fervent attachment of heart, with which the SOUL of Christianity — its vital and life-giving essence — was clung to, advocated, appealed for, in the midst of this confounding din about the outworks of opinion. Now that it is so far past, let us gratefully adore the goodness which has brought us through, purified, improved, and advanced as a people, rather than consumed, dwindled, deteriorated. We had a conscientious and extreme dislike to controversy. We dreaded its operation as a blight on the kindliness of the affections and the devoutness of the spirit. We entered its perilous way with anxious alarm. But we now find that our fears did not prophesy truly. Piety has not decayed, religion has not languished, the charities of life have not perished. On the contrary, we seem to have clasped the more closely to our bosom the spiritual treasures of our faith, and to have valued them more highly than ever. We tested and felt anew their unspeakable worth. And, probably, practical and vital religion was never more esteemed and prevalent, than at this very time, when we are issuing from a storm which seemed destined to destroy it.

This, then, is the present aspect of our religious affairs. We have discussed with our differing brethren the doctrines

respecting which we differed, and the questions are at rest. *The result is, that we are a community by ourselves.* When we began the debate, we were members of the general Congregational body, communicants at the same tables, and sheep under the same shepherds. (I speak in general terms.) Now, a separation has taken place. We have our own congregations, our own ministers, our own institutions and instruments of religious improvement. It is a crisis of unspeakable interest to us. We are deeply concerned to know what is the character and power of those institutions, what the nature and operation of our distinctive faith, and how far we are faithful representatives, advocates, stewards, of that pure and glorious gospel on whose behalf we have been allowed to contend.

I feel oppressed with the magnitude and solemnity of the question I am approaching. I have looked at it in some moments of retired thought, when I could get far enough from the distracting bustle of this world's interests to perceive the worth of higher things, and have been overwhelmed, as I mused, at the vastness of the considerations here involved. I fear that those most concerned are too insensible to them. I fear that the god of this world is blinding their eyes to the tremendous responsibilities of their position. I know myself to be habitually so careless and unalive to it all, that I am alarmed lest we should be found all sleeping together in a fatal security; and I pray for strength to be able to set forth something of the truth, and to draw to it the attention of my fellow-believers.

I must begin with a statement respecting our community, which is necessary to be carefully considered, in order to a just appreciation of what shall follow. We are familiar with the distinction between *real* and *nominal* Christians. Every sect, every congregation, has its nominal adherents,

— those, namely, who, from birth, or residence, or policy, or other accidental circumstances, are attached to it, but are not deeply pledged to it as a matter of conscience and salvation. There are such nominal Christians every where. They are found in our community, as well as in others. Generally speaking, they are regarded in any community, not as a part of the actual, efficient force of the camp, nor as the fair representatives of the character and principles of the body. *Neither are they to be accounted such in ours;* — and this is a position to be insisted on. It unavoidably happens, from the circumstances of the case, that our community is encumbered with rather an unusual proportion of these irregular adherents; and it is a fact, not only not to be overlooked, but to be carefully explained, if we would understand aright our situation and our duties.

Let us recollect, then, that there are among us two classes of congregations, — the old and the new, — originating under different circumstances, and existing beneath different influences. The old congregations are, many of them, equal, in point of antiquity, to the country itself; they have very gradually receded from the Orthodoxy of the forefathers, and have become what they are without passing through any period of effervescence or convulsion. Such societies, in point of steadfastness, order, and general quietness of faith, do not differ from other old societies. But the new congregations have been the creation of the times. They have been formed by schism and secession; and, like all seceders, have something of a spirit not perfectly accordant with the best condition of personal religion. Some of them are the offspring of an open rupture and a violent contest with friends and neighbors, when the spirit of religion was mingled with personal animosity. Some have more calmly withdrawn from the places in which they were brought up, where

they had long silently listened to doctrines which they disbelieved, and had sat, for the sake of peace, among religionists with whom they had no sympathy. They have always been in opposition to the minister, and to the current theology, of the place; consequently, they have received into their souls none of those wholesome influences which come from early attachment to the institutions of the gospel, and are very likely to be void of that deep sense of their worth and necessity, which leads men to struggle for them and maintain them, at any cost and at some sacrifice.

And, next, in all our congregations, and throughout every part of the country, there is a class of men who have attached themselves to us simply because we are not Orthodox; men who dislike Calvinism, but like nothing else; who think religion a good thing, that ought to be supported, and are glad to find some form which they can support, different from that which they have been taught heartily to hate. They are anti-Calvinists, anti-Orthodox, anti-zealots, anti-every thing severe and urgent in religion. They will not forsake it, because to do so would put them out of good society; indeed, they are not without a vague traditional respect for it. They maintain a pew in the church for the same reason that the worldly-minded merchant asks his minister to say grace when he has company to dine. It is decent, and is expected of him. Such men are found among the loose hangers-on of every sect. A sect in the church militant is made up like an army going forth to war. There is the select body of the wise and hearty, who enter zealously into the merits of the cause, and give themselves to it soul and body. There is the larger number of considerate and faithful adherents, bound to it unflinchingly, but who are merely followers of the opinions of their betters, and take on themselves none of the responsibility of judging

the merits of the case, or deciding on the propriety of the measures. There is still another class, who care little about the matter, who are in this army merely because it so happened, but are no more interested in its movements or success, than as they increase or diminish their own personal comforts. And, lastly, there are the loose retainers of the camp, now here, now there, now nowhere, who like the protection of the flag and swell the numbers of the march, but who own no allegiance, perform no service, and are but a pestilent hinderance to those who are earnest in the cause. Such men, I say, are hanging about the skirts of every sect, — they hang about ours; would to God we could make good Christians of them! they are far enough from it now.

There are others, too, far enough from being good Christians; forward and respectable men, who, for worldly reasons merely, whether of public good or of personal credit, take a zealous part in the secular concerns of the congregation, and identify all its interests with their own character, — very earnestly devoted to a cause to which they bring disrepute by their own characters, — sincerely wishing to strengthen the hand of religion, and by the very act calling forth the sneers of the ungodly, and encouraging the ribaldry of the vain. Would to God that such men would either leave the ark of the Lord to itself, or purify themselves before they touch it!

It is sometimes made occasion of reproach that such men are found to attach themselves to our societies. But very unreasonably; for, as I said, they are to be found attached to every sect: every sect numbers among its followers many merely nominal Christians, and many worldly, irreligious men. The agitations of the times may have cast a larger proportion of these into our ranks than into those of the more popular sects. If so, it is precisely what has

always happened, and must happen, in regard to those denominations which distinguish themselves in the contest for liberty. It is precisely what took place at the Reformation. At that time, the Reformed church, struggling for liberty, was obnoxious to this same reproach, and was accused as tauntingly of protecting the lax and irreligious, as the Unitarian church now. Any reform which is urged on the principle of greater freedom of mind will be open to the same accusation; for it will be favored by many worthless men who are strenuous advocates for *liberty*, but care nothing for virtue. At the beginning of the Reformation in England, it was a common saying, "The farther from Rome, the nearer to God;" and under shelter of this, multitudes were glad to go as far as possible from the good things of Rome, no less than from the evil. Bishop Burnet tells us, respecting those days, that "the irregular and immoral lives of many of the professors of the gospel gave their enemies great advantage to say, that they ran away from confession, penance, fasting, and prayers, only that they might be under no restraint, but indulge themselves in a licentious and dissolute course of life." It is to be expected that irregular and licentious men should thus take advantage of the state of the times; but their doing so should create no prejudice against the cause itself. It is, however, one of the circumstances to be taken into solemn consideration in our judgment respecting the position which we occupy, and the duties which are imposed upon us.

Such is a cursory view of the condition in which we stand at the close of the struggle, which has made us a distinct denomination among the churches of our land. Thus do we stand before the world, just three centuries after the beginning of the Reformation, at the moment when we have been striving to do our share toward carrying its great principles into complete effect.

It is a moment for pausing to look around us, a crisis of unspeakable interest. It is now to be tried and known what are the power and worth of the principles for which we have been contending. It is to be seen whether we are willing to ADORN the doctrine we have secured to ourselves; whether we can LIVE for our faith, as well as fight for it; whether we will struggle as hard for the *character*, as we have done for the *name*, of Christians. It is impossible that the present state of things should not powerfully affect the all-important questions of personal religion, and call for strenuous exertions of duty on those who are thus subjected to a peculiar responsibility.

Character is, in a great measure, the offspring of circumstances. The action and results of principles are greatly modified by circumstances. In order to employ principles in such a manner as to secure their intended results, we must ascertain the nature and influence of the circumstances which affect their action. The men who, in one age of the world, show themselves under a certain aspect because necessarily moulded by the pressure of the age, would become of a wholly different stamp if subjected to the impressions of a later period; and the principles, whose action, being opposed by, or combined with, that of a certain state of society, leads to unhappy results, might become, in another state of society, the spring of all that is generous and great. Accordingly, it has been remarked, that the Puritan character, though such as could be formed only beneath Christian influences, is yet a character which will never appear again upon earth, because the very peculiar circumstances of that astonishing period can never be precisely repeated. Every period has its own circumstances, modifying in some way the operation of universal principles, and thus producing a character of its own; every subdi-

vision or subordinate circle in society modifies it still further, and produces another variety of the general character.

He that is wise seeks to ascertain what are these circumstances, and to use them or thwart them in such manner as shall bring about the best result on his own character. Every wise community will do the same.

Let us look at the Unitarian community, with this reference to the circumstances in which it is placed. What has it assumed as the universal principles of truth and duty? and how is their practical operation affected by the posture of the times? and what are the peculiar obligations thence resulting? I could not answer these questions in a volume; in this pamphlet I only pretend to hint at an answer.

In respect to *principles*, what is most worthy of observation seems to me this: It professes to have adopted as the universal principles of truth and duty those fundamental, everlasting principles, which are received by all Christians as the basis and substance of their faith, and which comprise the essence of all religion, morality, and philosophy. The process by which these principles are arrived at is very simple. It has, in following out the doctrines of the great Lutheran reform, stricken off from its list of theological articles those which were *peculiar* to the Romish church, and had made that church distinctively what it was; then, it removed those which formed the *peculiarities* of the Lutheran and the Calvinistic bodies; then it set aside those which were peculiar to the Church of England, and the Kirk of Scotland; and, in a word, it excluded whatever, in any one narrow body of believers, formed *the distinctive badge of that body*, — Moravian, Methodist, Baptist, Swedenborgian, &c., — reserving to itself whatever, by being found in each, was proved to be common in all. All that illustrious and unquestionable truth, which is so divine, so

essential, so undeniable, that no one of those numerous companies of the holy and good has been led by any philosophy or interest to withhold assent from it; all that glorious and comforting doctrine, which brings to consent and sympathy the purified spirits of our Pascals, Leightons, Doddridges, Wesleys, Cappes, and Penns, — this, separated from all accompanying admixtures, is that truth which the Unitarian community professes to receive as the binding, authoritative guide to the human soul. This is that to which the study of the Scriptures, unbiased by the authority of ages or of churches, naturally conducts. It places those who receive it at once in harmony with all the diversities of the church, as respects the essentials of religion, and in contrast to them, as regards the non-essentials. As if the sacred metal of truth having been coined up for current use by the different Christian peoples with various proportions and qualities of alloy, this people had proposed to separate from it, and cast away those meaner ingredients, and receive in circulation none but the original and unadulterated.

This is the IDEA. This is what they profess to desire, and to aim after. This is the image of full attainment, the mark of the high calling in Christian doctrine which is set up before us. Not that it has ever been reached; not that, in any community among us, this great perfection has been realized. Far from it. It is the glorious aim of many, but probably the actual attainment of none. And when we consider how glorious it is, and what incitements we have to strive after it, it is mortifying and humbling to observe how far short of it even they fall who have the clearest perception of its grandeur and excellence.

Indeed, is it not too true, that the very process of mind through which this pure faith is to be sought and attained,

— the process of comparing, and discussing, and discriminating, and sifting, — is, in some respects, unfavorable to a due appreciation of its worth when attained? For it is the unhappy consequence of controversy to exaggerate the importance of the disputed doctrines; to draw to them a disproportionate attention; to give to them an undue prominence; and to dismiss from their proper place in the thoughts, those which ought to be the predominating and regulating truths. There is no doubt that it has so happened in the case before us. Strongly as men have been persuaded that the *common* and not the *disputed* truths are of essential and vital moment, yet, as it is the *disputed* which have necessarily been kept prominent during the long discussion, the feelings have been too much kept hovering about them, and prevented from fervently dwelling on the verities of acknowledged supremacy. Thus it is easy to see how the habit may arise of rejoicing with ardent sincerity in the possession of this light, and yet devoting more thought to what is undoubtedly of inferior moment.

Herein, I must remark, by the way, is one of the infelicities under which this particular controversy has laid, beyond most of those which have agitated the Christian world. It has turned upon points of philological interpretation and metaphysical discrimination, which, however they may satisfy the head, have little in them to excite the fervors of the heart; and yet, being connected with all those holiest words and ideas about which the heart ought to have its deepest fervors, has directly tended to check and chill its natural warmth. Not so was it in some of the other remarkable contests of the church; not such the points for which Methodism contended, and the Quietists and Quakers suffered. They fell on other days, and were thrown into other channels of thought, which did less to separate the

subjects of their debate from those of their rightful affection; and in this were they more happy than we. I do not say it to excuse our remissness; God forbid! but to point out one unhappy circumstance of the times, to the hurtful influence of which we ought to be keenly alive.

To return, then, to the point from which I may seem to have been departing; — never was it given to a company of believers to be united by constitution or bond so dignified and admirable as this, when understood according to its true idea. It is the naked heart, the inmost core of Christian truth, separated from every addition with which human ignorance, error, ambition, or superstition, had connected it. A famous sect of philosophers there anciently was, who thought to arrive at true wisdom by selecting from all the schools what seemed truest in each, and uniting them in a new system. But the purpose of these modern Eclectics is better still, — to reject what is peculiar to each school, and retain that radical and seminal central truth, which Christ proclaimed from heaven; — to bow to no human wisdom, be led by no finite will, governed by no fallible authority, — but to be free, absolutely and unreservedly, from all constraint upon thought, inquiry, conscience, faith, except the constraint of the revealed Word, and the willing allegiance of the conscientious mind. It is impossible for imagination to conceive a more sublime position for man or angel, in earth or heaven, than this, — that of a spirit erect and independent, owning no control but that of the Being which made it, and to him and his will surrendered without reserve.

This is the result to which the sublime principles of the Reformation conduct. Those principles insist on freedom of thought, liberty of conscience, the right of private judgment, independence of human control, in the strictest sense.

They permit and require every man to inquire of the Scriptures, and decide for himself — with unqualified submission to God, with absolute independence of man. That denomination has most consistently adhered to them, which has thrown away every creed but the Bible, and unseated every judge but Christ.

If I understand the subject aright, this is what Unitarianism claims to have done. What a responsibility does it imply! What honesty of mind, what singleness, directness, and steadfastness of will, what resolute allegiance to conscience and God, does it demand of its disciples! It might be excusable for other men to inquire dilatorily for truth, and with an indolent foot follow the path of their convictions; for they have cast a portion of their responsibility upon others, and professedly learn much from human teachers. But for those who claim to be free from the interference of every human mind, to plant their faith and risk their salvation on the word of God alone, — they are guilty of most inexcusable madness, if they stop short at any secondary knowledge, if they do not draw industriously from that infinite fountain, if they be not as absolutely subjected to God as they are freed from man. For the object of their liberty is not, that they may follow wildly their own momentary and undisciplined impulses, — that they may take up and lay down at pleasure the thoughts and pursuits which expediency may suggest. They are set free from the control of man, as the planets are, that they may the more exactly and blissfully observe the true orbit appointed by their Maker; made free by the truth, that they may obey the truth, by the truth be sanctified, and thus arrive at that only honor which a rational soul should desire, or in which it can find its well-being.

Has any one fully realized this great idea in his own

mind and history? Is there any ONE who has been thus gloriously true to his trust? Let us believe that there have been many such. We think that we have known them, — some, shining out illustriously to brighten and shame the world — some, in the humblest retirements of life, to call forth the admiration and eulogy of the few who see them there, and who marvel that God should not have placed them on high among men. Let us hope that there are many beyond what is supposed, who have arrived at this singular attainment. But does it characterize any *community?* Do we see the community, which bears upon its very front the token of this holy and resolute independence, which is imbued throughout with this heavenward and indefeasible allegiance to conscience, unswayed by human opinion, reputation, and fashion, consecrated to duty, and sacrificing to duty all selfish and worldly ends? Do we see the community, which has so thrown off the dominion of man, that it is led neither in its opinions nor its practices by the fluctuating standard of the popular breath, but is palpably subject to the supreme and unbending law of God? I think not. Liberty of thought and opinion is strenuously proclaimed; in this proud land it has become almost a wearisome cant; our speeches and journals, religious and political, are made nauseous by the vapid and vain-glorious reiteration. But does it, after all, *characterize any community among us?* Is there any one to which a qualified observer shall point, and say, "*There*, opinion is free?" On the contrary, is it not a fact, a sad and deplorable fact, that in no land on this earth is the mind more fettered than it is here? that here, what we call public opinion has set up a despotism such as exists nowhere else? Public opinion — a tyrant, sitting in the dark, wrapped up in mystification and vague terrors of obscurity; deriving power no one

knows from whom; like an Asian monarch, unapproachable, unimpeachable, undethronable, perhaps illegitimate, but irresistible in its power to quell thought, to repress action, to silence conviction, — and bringing the timid perpetually under an unworthy bondage of mean fear to some impostor opinion, some noisy judgment which gets astride on the popular breath for a day, and controls, through the lips of impudent folly, the speech and actions of the wise.

From this influence and rule, from this bondage to opinion, no community, as such, is free, though, doubtless, individuals are. But your community, brethren, based on the principles which you profess, is bound to be so. Each for himself in faith, each for all in action; men to be loved and served, but not to be followed or obeyed; no master but Christ, no Father but God; — these are your maxims. Man seems something more than human when these principles are stated; but he becomes something less, if, professing them in form, he falsify them in fact.

As I am writing this, my eye is caught by the motto which stands upon the cover of one of your periodical journals — "*Liberty, Holiness, Love.*" It seems to have been assumed as descriptive of the objects which you are to keep in view, and the character which you are to form. They are well-chosen words. They constitute a beautiful and harmonious trio, whose blended hues, whose vigorous coaction, delineate and describe what the Christian church should be, what the Christian truth should produce. Is it not the purpose of the truth to "make free"? and where the spirit of the Lord is, is there not liberty? Is it not the province of the truth to "sanctify"? And doth it not "work by love"? Every one that hath been wrought upon by its power, *knows* that such are its effects. And where it hath brought out the church from its more than Egyptian

bondage to earth, and sense, and man, — from the degrading slavery of sin into the liberty of the sons of God; where it hath raised it up, by its celestial energy, to a thorough holiness; and filled it with that love to God and men, which is the substance of religion on earth, and the essential spirit of heaven — then hath it not done its errand, hath it not accomplished its mission? It augurs well, therefore, for any church or body of men, that it will take this for its watchword, and hang it out as an ensign to rally by in the face of the world. It describes what ought to be the spirit of the Christian world. God grant it may prove to be your spirit!

But it must not only be hung out from your walls, or blazoned on your armor, or written on the foreheads of your priests. It must be engraven on the living tablets of your hearts. It must be a deeply-felt sentiment of your inmost souls. It must be the earnest voice of your resolute spirits, day and night, continually prompting to thoughts, words, deeds, that correspond. It must be the inwrought character of your private lives, and the evident character of your churches, as well as the motto of your books.

Liberty, as I have already said, you have mostly achieved, and you jealously prize. But what if some should esteem it a license from holiness, and a commission to hate whom they please? The thing is not impossible; and I say, see to it, that no one among you allow in himself, nor encourage in another, this lamentable self-deception. You had better be suffering all the horrors of the middle passage, without hope of redemption or end, than walk abroad in the semblance of free men, and yet be slaves to selfishness and lust. Your religion has been bestowed on you, that you might do therewith a great work of moral advancement for yourselves and for your fellow-men. Jesus Christ hath smitten off your

chains, that you may go and do that work unhindered. And now, to boast of your light, your privileges, your deliverance from superstition and priestcraft, while you live a corrupt and selfish life, is but proving yourselves the fit subjects for a heavier bondage and the discipline of a more mortifying restraint.

What, therefore, I ask, are you doing in this day of your privilege? What sort of men is it that you are permitting yourselves to be? What sort of churches of the Lord Jesus are you setting up in the world? Now that you have been set apart from the body of the believing world, and made to stand forth by yourselves as representatives of the Gospel, it is as if a message from the Lord had come to you, and bid you inquire and know what sort of representatives you are.

Cast a scrutinizing glance, — not cursory, not partial, — look faithfully, look deep, — *for if ye will judge yourselves ye shall not be judged,* — upon all the multiform congregations among you, — make the charitable allowance, which you may, which you ought, for the humors of the time, and for the untoward influences of a broken age; — think justly on the countervailing advantages by which, in some portions of your community, you are signalized; — survey your whole land, from Dan to Beersheba, from your Jerusalem to the desert and the sea; — ponder soberly the condition in which you find it; — penetrate intently and profoundly into your own heart, try your own character, and search out and note down your own springs of action and purposes of existence; — and then say, Is the state of religion what it should be among such a people? Have Christian faith and immortal truth that commanding influence which they should have? Is this people marked by a scrupulousness and high-minded conscientiousness, by an all-controlling regard to

the divine will, by eager, hearty, and self-denying activity in behalf of other men? Is the spirit of the Gospel their spirit, and the life of Jesus their pattern, and do they show themselves as devotedly resolved to be free from selfshness and wrong, as to be free from creeds and human authority?

I feel that this would be a trying inquisition. No church on the face of the earth ever did or could abide it without shrinking and shame. Neither can that to which I put it now. It touches to the quick. It reveals fearful deficiencies. Yet it must be made; and woe to the man, or the body of men, that would refuse to look at it honestly, and that would shun the investigation, for the sake of present peace. Let every man open his eyes. If there be error, let him see it. If there be wrong, let him acknowledge it. If there be danger, let him not sleep over it, but manfully rise up, proclaim it, and begin the war against it. Nothing is so fatal as an unwillingness to know ourselves; nothing so shameful as voluntarily to be ignorant of ourselves. Let us know the worst; we shall then be prepared for the worst. Let us know the truth; we shall then not perish by falsehood and delusion.

I do not pursue these inquiries. They belong to the decision of a higher tribunal, whose awful judgment it is not for man to anticipate. Yet we do know, — for God has not concealed it from us, — on what grounds that judgment will proceed, and we cannot affect to be ignorant of the grounds on which our own opinion should be made up. We know what character God requires of men and of nations; we understand perfectly what manner of religion that is which satisfies the description of the New Testament. And no man is so stupid, that he shall not be able to say, if he will, whether that religion rules his own heart, and pervades the society in which he moves. It is a religion which

may be described in a few strong words better than in volumes. It is a religion, not of passion, not of forms, not of profession, not of decencies, not of words, not of fancy. It is not reverie, nor speculation, nor political craft, nor good policy. It is a stern, inflexible principle of truth and duty, which swerves not from right and has no patience with wrong; — an unblenching faith in God, which sees and trusts his hand in every thing, and trusts no second cause, independently of him; — and a philanthropic purpose to do good to men, which no coldness, nor ingratitude, nor scorn of the worldly and prudent, can check or abate. It is the conscientious devotion of the affections and the life to the service of God and man, as that which alone becomes a being whose existence is never to end. This is the religion which heavenly truth produces. Does it act on some individual? It makes him severely yet cheerfully faithful to every relation and trust, not because he is a citizen of earth, but because he has an immortal nature. Or on a community? It makes it full of righteousness and peace, where God is more regarded than man, and therefore man is made more blessed than elsewhere because he is God's child.

This is the religion, which, for our own sake, for the world's sake, we must labor to establish, and without which our wisdom is but folly, and our zeal but idle breath. We may demonstrate the sublimest theories, may proclaim the soundest faith, may utter the voice of angels; but if it do not come to this result, it is all but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. And this result can only spring from *the vigorous action of the truth, through the medium of its established institutions.*

At no period of the world was it ever more important to insist on the necessity of thus sustaining the institutions of

the gospel. Never were they more endangered, or their holy influences more put in jeopardy, than by the hazardous experiments, and rash and worldly confidence, and various divisions, of these unsettled and broken times. The agitations of society have disturbed the foundations and weakened the strength of the churches in all parts of the land, and threatened some of them even with extinction. In many humble and impoverished parishes, numbers are few, means are small, and the gospel is costly. It is an alarming problem yet to be solved, What shall be done to keep alive the fire on those lesser altars; and now that the law has forsaken the church door in this as well as in the other states, a new era has arrived, when the wise must contrive how the gospel shall be supported among the thinly-scattered and feeble, so that its light shall continue to burn, and our children of the coming generations shall be born to the enjoyment of Christian worship. Let those who are able devise; let the favored and wealthy be ready to contribute; let all ponder and pray; — and God forbid that, through our remissness, one cottage shall remain upon our blessed fields, whose inmates are beyond the reach of the Sabbath bell and the pulpit exhortation. There are some who do not feel this aright; — some, blessed by God with property as well as liberty, who fancy that both are for themselves only, and who meanly withdraw from the support of his worship. There are congregations made up, in considerable part, of men who are more willing to live without the preaching of the word, than to tax themselves so much, for the means of salvation, as they do for sugar in their tea or for needless ornaments on the dress of their daughters. This is a crying enormity. No one who values religion can refuse the little sacrifice which would be necessary for its support. Better give up half the luxuries of civilized life than suffer

the public means of religion to decay. Those luxuries may be spared, and no suffering will ensue. But if religious institutions cease, barbarism and profaneness will come over the land, and the happy charities of life perish. And, certainly, in these days of abundance and growing ease, — when persecution is known but in name, and suffering for Christ's sake is a thing only of history, — it is an inconceivable meanness to refuse the little self-denial which would enable one to double the former parish tax, and, instead of this, to pay over to the dancing-master, or the milliner, the few dollars which might insure the preaching of the gospel.

The avarice and selfishness of the nominal, the worldly, the indifferent, and the unbelieving, and the subdivisions of sectarian zeal which multiply churches by dividing worshipers, have seriously affected the regular means of supporting religious institutions. But what then? They must none the less, — rather the more, — be supported; and it presents a fresh opportunity to the faithful to evince their attachment to the truth by some extra effort in its behalf. Many have so regarded it, and have met the emergency with alacrity, have exhibited the most praiseworthy readiness, and poured out bountifully to satisfy the demands of the times. Let them receive a hearty tribute of applause for their faithful work. But let a decided and open expression of disapprobation and contempt be awarded to those selfish worldlings, who count their shillings more dear than instruction, and can afford themselves any luxury but that of going to church. Let a severer rebuke await those arrogant and despicable impostors, (of whom it is said there are some, though surely they must be few,) who make a boast of their enlightenment, and presume to take on their lips the advocacy of liberal truth, and yet close their hearts against all appeals for aid in spreading and sustaining the

light they glory in. Truly, the light of such men is but darkness, — darkness that may be felt. They are strangers to the truth which they profess to know; and, loud as they talk, if they could have their way, it would cease in another generation to shine upon the world.

It is not easy to use a gentler word in reference to those, who, with the same confidence in their own superior light, yet absent themselves one half the time from the worship which they support. These are mostly your luxurious citizens, your genteel religionists, who go to church for example's sake, and because religion is an excellent thing for the poor; who kneel on cushions of down and confess their sins in all attitudes of languor and grace; — great admirers of beautiful style and poetical imagery; — who divide their religious feelings between the sermon of the morning, and the dinner of the noonday, and the conversation or slumbers of the afternoon. This race of accommodating Christians is principally the growth of larger towns, and may be found in all our cities patronizing the fashionable church, — no matter what the denomination may chance to be. It flourishes well among those whose weeks are given to amusement. It exhibits its striking sense of the contrast which should exist between religion and the world, by the crowded condition of its cotillion rooms, and the emptiness of its churches. Doubtless it would be too much to expect of those who are wearied out with the pleasures of the week, that they should have spirit or strength to worship God as much on Sunday as common people, who have no such weighty cares; it would be unreasonable to require them in the afternoon to attend church, when they can hardly find time to get through their courses and drink their wine. In every great city, there are a few congregations, composed of these privileged persons, these lights of the world, these

patterns and benefactors of society, who have made such advancement in religion, that it is wholly unnecessary for them to worship God on Sunday afternoon, and their ministers have the opportunity of looking without interruption directly upon the rich caparisons of their elegant pews. They would, probably, not think it perfectly fair that he also should leave the church, and disappoint the few who venture to do so vulgar a thing as keep him countenance in the worship of God; he must adhere to the fashion of preaching all day, just as much as they to their fashion of leaving him to preach alone.

It unfortunately happens, that this practice, selfish and indecent as it is, and inconsistent with all right views of the object of public worship, is yet, — alas for the corrupting power of thoughtless fashion! — easily embraced by many who not only mean well in general, but who rightfully make some pretensions to religion. *But in vain will you look to see religion flourish where this vice is prevalent.* In vain will you expect that those will do much or care much for its purity and influence, who manifest so little interest in its institutions, — who statedly, purposely, habitually, allow themselves in that practice, which, if general, would be the overthrow of public religious observances. Let it be especially noted, — as what concerns especially the topics before us, — that in these days of progressive reform, when in religion, as in all things else, old customs cease to be revered, and a departure from them is thought to be *of course* an improvement, — when, "liberty" being the watchword, the multitude are easily made to fancy that constancy is bondage, and to suppose that they advance into light just in proportion as they recede from their fathers or their old-fashioned neighbors; — under such circumstances, it is necessary that special effort be made to retain a sober rev-

erence for the house of God and his worship; that, in fact, uncommon pains be taken in every possible way to strengthen the habit of regarding them as sacred and divine. We are lost, — I speak with solemn deliberation, — we are lost, and our power to benefit and advance great principles is gone, whenever we shall encourage or permit the public means of religion to be slighted. And no more mistaken or false friend to the cause of human liberty and improvement can be found, than he whose conduct in this respect makes men think that he personally feels no interest in it, and whose example directly tends but to quench that interest in others. The cause of Episcopacy never was much promoted by those splendid buildings in which the boasted liturgy is read every Sunday afternoon to empty seats. Methodism never spread itself by the agency of men whose hearts allowed them to prefer a dinner to a sermon. It was not such men that introduced, or helped to introduce, the gospel, or started the Reformation; and we may depend upon it, that those will have no share in the completion of that glorious Reformation, however they may boast, who cast personal slight on the worship and preaching by which it is to be brought about.

I am aware that all this applies to but a small class; but it serves none the less to illustrate my positions, and it may, indirectly, give admonition to others. I am aware, also, that all this relates but to the *means* of religion; but without the means, who will venture to guaranty the *end?* There are, I know, a few mystical, speculative men, who are possessed with the fancy that not themselves only, but that the world, has outgrown these leading-strings; who make light of all instrumental help; and who thus — with a good, but most mistaken intent — virtually join the scoffer in sapping the foundations of religion. It is enough to give a passing

word to this. It is the error and sickness of the times, threatening serious disasters; for where one thoughtful and safe man lays aside this wholesome attachment to institutions, instruments, and helps, weaker men will do it in multitudes, and will shelter their indolence, worldliness, and selfishness, like their more enlightened brethren, beneath the plea of a spirituality which needs not the nourishment of these beggarly elements. It is one of the perils of the times. Let the strong watchmen be awake to it. Let them not cease, day nor night, to cry out against it with a loud and alarming cry. Let them suffer none to sleep under the fatal notion that religion will grow up of itself in their hearts, without the culture which God and nature have ordained; or that a great truth will prevail because it is great, without any care to guard and enforce it. Let them pour scorn on these puerile and superficial conceits. Let them strangle this idle and mischievous folly. Let them silence those who profanely pretend a special trust in God and his ways, while in practice they contemn his purposes and neglect the way of his commandment. If this great work for the perfection of Christianity, and of men, is to be done, it must be done by men, putting in operation the necessary means. If you do not take your share in it, — no matter what your plea, you will share none of the honor promised to those who do it, — you will taste the bitter shame ordained for those who hinder it. If you fancy yourself already too enlightened to require the further aid of times and ordinances, the greater the cause for using and honoring them, that you may bring others to the same advanced state. If you are sure that the great cause is in triumphant progress, the greater the reason that you should not hold back, but, if you love it, should "pursue the triumph and partake the gale." If you think it by any thing encumbered, hindered, thwarted, the

greater the cause that you should be awake and active, — removing obstacles, encouraging friends, and swelling the tide of men and measures, which is to sweep away the impediments of the truth.

It will be said by some, "Let the people be truly interested in religion, and they will both support and attend its institutions. Make them religious, — that is what you have to do; until then, you in vain call for their contributions, or expect them to be present in the church." Undoubtedly this would be a remedy for all backwardness. The truly devoted will spare neither their money nor their time. But how are men to *become* thus devoted? Are we to use no means to render them so, until they are already such? Are we to be told that there is no motive to bring men within Christian influences, short of that absorbing religious feeling, which would show that the work is already nearly done? Certainly not; there are other motives, powerful motives. It as much pertains to good citizenship as to piety, to take care that public worship be supported; and multitudes of those, who are at present indifferent and worldly, think of it reverently and well, and intend by and by to be sanctified by it. All these are to be entreated to perceive their obligations; they are to be called on, as patriots and friends of social order and peace, to prevent the downfall of these powerful seminaries of moral instruction. But I have more particularly in view another class, — those already referred to, who count themselves the subjects of a glorious emancipation, the participators of a great light, and who freely use words of self-congratulation. They are, or profess to be, keenly alive to a sense of mental degradation, and are perfectly aware of the great privilege they enjoy in the light and liberty of the present era. They are very honestly ready to thank God that they are not as other men, — members of

churches which fetter them by human confessions and bind them to make no advance in their apprehensions of spiritual truth. Now, is it decent for such men, — who not only enjoy great privileges, but show that they are aware of it, — is it decent for them to withdraw their support from the institutions which guaranty their peculiar advantages? Is it consistent or becoming in them to forsake the churches, which they assert to resound with the purest doctrine? to doom to poverty the preachers whom they believe to be the most enlightened apostles of God's word, and to discourage the eloquent assertors of the most important views which have dawned upon the earth? I address these questions to a *select class*, which it is mortifying to say has an existence, but which — God be praised! — is as small as it is arrogant and false. I address their sense of shame, their sense of dignity, their love of consistency, their magnanimity, their intelligence, their hope of immortality, their faith in a future reckoning.

If all who profess to honor religion were religious men, there would indeed be no call for expostulation or entreaty on behalf of religion. But alas! the inconsistency of believers with their profession is an evil as old and as notorious as the existence of the church itself. The solemn and indignant questions of Paul in his second chapter to the Romans, have been equally applicable to multitudes in every age since; and it is more a matter of grief than astonishment, that they still apply to many of our own day. The increase of light is with them rather a cause for glorying, than a call to duty. They, with great complacency, rest in their light, and make their boast in God, and know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, and yet, through unfaithfulness to their light, they dishonor God. They live respectable lives of worldly decorum, but have no

spirituality of affection, no desire for excellence beyond the ordinary mark, no conception of any thing more pure and disinterested than the average of decent society has presented to their view. Their standard is low, their taste sensual, their principle inactive, their wisdom earthly and sensual, though not perhaps devilish. They live decently, but only for themselves and for this world. They would be very sorry to be accounted other than friends of religion, but they would be greatly ashamed to be pointed out as pious men. They are proud of the dignity of their intellectual nature, and do not doubt the immortality of their souls; but nothing is farther from their intention or desire, than to occupy their minds now with the subjects which they suppose are to occupy their future immortality.

There is a lamentable deficiency in our practical apprehension of what are the requisitions of our religion. We do not see, feel, realize, the extent and strictness of its obligations. With all our getting, we have not got a spiritual understanding of its admirable and glorious purpose. We are yet in the alphabet of Christian attainment; we are of the earth, earthy. Who is there that, in his best hours of serious contemplation, has not been made deeply to deplore this? Let me not be met with the cry that there is such a thing as being righteous over-much; nor let the old saying be turned against me, "Physician, heal thyself,—practice, instead of preaching." No one has such a claim to be heard in denouncing an evil, as he who can tell of it from personal experience; no man's warning is so good as his who can show how himself and his friends are suffering. There is a great dislike to austerity, a great dread of puritanism, a horror of cant, and fanaticism, and superstition; and one cannot recommend a stricter devotion, or a more scrupulous morality, than the ordinary customs of the world

make requisite, without the risk of being branded by the more worldly as an enthusiast or a hypocrite, and being told by many of the more serious, "that it is too late in the day; that this preciseness and scrupulosity were well enough formerly, but that the spirit of the times forbids it now; *nous avons changé tout cela;* it is vain to think of carrying men back to modes of thought which are long obsolete, and to habits of devout observance which savor more of the cloister than of the world."

Let us admit the changes which have taken place, and which render it requisite to abandon modes of operation, and address, and observance, which are no longer adapted to accomplish their design. But human nature has not changed; the Christian religion has not changed; the institutions of God have not changed; — there may be a diversity of operations, but there is the same God, who speaks the same truth for the instrument, the same nature to be wrought upon. The requisitions of that God are as rigidly conformable to the eternal and uncompromising law of right, as they ever were; the path of sentiment and life to which truth would lead, is no whit less straight and direct; the nature to be perfected, is accessible to the same and to no different principles and motives, and is to be moulded into the same character. Surely, that the Christian character is to be inferior in moral elevation, that it is to have less of spirituality and self-consecration to principle, less of the Christlike, and the Godlike, than in other days, will not be pretended. What it was in the days of Jesus, such it is now; such as it showed itself in his example, such it must be in the lives of his followers at the present time. To make it less disinterested, less unworldly, less scrupulously averse from all contamination of impurity and all suspicion of wrong, would be to make it another thing than the Christian character.

To make it more compatible with a heart devoted to ambition and gain, with a life of thoughtlessness, frivolity, and uselessness, — to make it synonymous with self-interest, and the decent external proprieties of civilized life, — would be to change its definition from that which its Master gave to it. To make it of so pliable a texture, of so flexible and complying a disposition, that it shall be consistent with any degree of selfishness and worldliness which does not destroy a man's reputation; with any devotedness to luxury and folly, or any modes or forms of business which are not discreditable; with any absorption in useless fancies, indolent indulgences, or money-making cares, which are not absolutely injurious to society; or, in a word, with all and any character of heart and life, which does not offend against human law, or honor, or fashion, — is to make it a convenient tool for human depravity, instead of an infallible guide to celestial purity. And yet, we are perfectly aware, that there are men of all these sorts of characters, who deem their lives very sufficiently religious; and who are indignant against the austerity and uncharitableness of any definition of the Christian life, which would put in jeopardy their empty self-complacency.

There must be some standard; — and it cannot require to be proved, that it must be a peculiar one, — a high one, — an inflexible one; — a standard, which will not vary to accommodate itself to different states of society, or different dispositions of individuals; but which, like him who established it, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; — making the true disciple of the first century the same, in all essential and characteristic features, with the consistent Christian of the middle ages and these latter days; in things indifferent granting a privilege to human imperfection; but, in the vital spirit, the essential elements, the

absolute characteristics, demanding imperatively an absolute and undeviating conformity.

The great danger is that of admitting too lax a standard. The world is always encroaching upon it, and the weakness of the human heart gives way. It may be that the figure is too strong, which represents the Christian character as a fire burning from out of the ocean, which can exist in the midst of so contrary an element only by perpetual miracle; but certainly there are counteracting impulses, principles, and opinions in the world, which render a perpetual effort necessary on the part of the Christian to sustain the liveliness and purity of his faith; there are influences from society, from example, from without and from within, which tend constantly to secularize his feelings, to bring down the tone of his affections and convictions, to dull his susceptibility to truth and purity. The crying danger is that of admitting too low a standard. Many a man, — who has learned what human virtue should be from the study of the Scriptures and devout communion with God, and who, in the private contemplations of his early days, has suffered his imagination to draw pictures of the good people whom he was hereafter to meet in the world, — has found, on entering life, that his notions were far above the actual standard of good men, that his idea of the prevalent religion was too beautiful for the Christianity of Christians, was an image of something not to be seen in the world; he has found them shaking their heads at him with a wise and meaning smile, as they informed him that his notions of goodness were impracticable, that they would do for the closet, but not for those who know the world, and must live among men. At first he is disappointed, shocked, and mortified; but he gradually becomes accustomed to so lamentable a state of things, acquiesces in it as unavoidable, and comes

by and by to have his enthusiasm as thoroughly cooled, and his ardor for perfect goodness as completely turned into discreet caution, and his charity as carefully guarded by selfishness, as the older men about him.

It has been the disgrace of Christians, that they have not stood out against this worldly tendency, and kept themselves up to their own temperature in spite of the cold atmosphere of society. If their souls had imbibed the full vitality of their religion, if they had been filled with the spirit of its life, they would have found in themselves the power of resistance, just as they find it in their bodies. The mysterious principle of organic life imparts to the body a sustaining energy, which keeps the vital heat invariably the same; — though all around be chill, it remains unaltered; and Providence has afforded means of aiding it to preserve this temperature which protects it from distraction. When *the soul truly lives*, it possesses a similar power of resistance to external influence. The world may operate upon it, the moral atmosphere of society may close around it with its deadliest influences; but it has the power of resistance; it may retain its own standard; and God, by his word and Spirit, has made provision of means by which, in any extremity of exposure, it may be completely protected. If men will not use those means, if they will not clothe themselves in the protecting dress of watchfulness and prayer, they will lose in the world the warmth of their devotional natures, and cease to enjoy the full health of the immortal soul. It is the disgrace of Christians that it has so often been the case with them. Some, many, have wrapped themselves in their principles of holiness, and refused to give place for a moment to earthly solicitation or example, and thus have exhibited illustrious instances of the beauty and excellence of Christianity. But, alas! others, too

many, have conformed themselves to the world, — they have dreaded to be singular, — they have been ashamed to be better than others, — and they have thus lost both the influence with others and the peace within themselves, which they might and ought to have possessed. Hence it is that society is not more thoroughly Christianized. The friends of Christianity have gone to the world, instead of insisting that the world should come to them. They have weakly given way. They have failed of presenting that dignified and resolute adherence to the convictions of conscience, that unhesitating, immovable devotedness to grand and immortal principles, which their infinite importance deserves. Nothing less than such devotedness could persuade a worldly-minded man, that they actually believed in their reality and eternity. How could he be persuaded, that those men loved supremely a better and immortal life, who were as eager and as unprincipled as others in the struggles of this? How could religion gain ground in the world, when advocated by men who were constantly qualifying and modifying the requisitions of their faith, to suit a sensual and worldly taste, and accommodate their own temporal interests?

There is no more serious mistake than the idea of promoting the interests of religion by diminishing its strictness, and thus bribing the favor of the world. The world is not to be so bribed. It sees through and despises the shallow manœuvre. None understand better than your most devoted worldlings the essential incompatibility between their spirit and the spirit of Christ, and they feel nothing but contempt for the weakness which thinks to attain their suffrages by softening down the requisitions of the eternal law. They can read and understand what the Lord requires of them, and their consciences compel them to admire its unapproachable purity. They feel for it something of the

reverence and awe, which it is suited to impress on every intelligent mind. And when they perceive its guardians and friends so insensible, or so faithless to its claims, as to press upon men something inferior in its stead, they view them as traitors, and instead of embracing, on their invitation, a cause which is thus unfaithfully dealt with, they turn with contempt and loathing from the false-hearted men. The cowardly and short-sighted policy has repelled from Christianity the very men it was designed to conciliate and win.

Christianity is designed to produce a great effect upon men and the world. But not a mixed, adulterated, mitigated Christianity. It produces its effects by *what it is*. Change it, and its power ceases; make it something else, and its operations are no longer the same. Say that, instead of going down into the bottom of the soul, and taking possession of the whole man, and informing his entire spirit and character, it is sufficient that it regulate his exterior deportment, and restrain him from the grosser sins, — you alter its character; — it is no longer what Christ taught, and it can no longer produce the effects which he proposed. It will excite a feeble interest; it will awaken a feeble emotion; it will therefore call forth slight exertion, and will end in a feeble virtue. Little will be felt, little, therefore, attempted, very little accomplished. Make the way very broad and easy, and many will walk in it; but whither will it lead them? There can be nothing of the striving, the earnestness, the energy, by which alone great characters are formed, and great enterprises achieved, and an exalted virtue reached. It is not the languor of an easy path which elevates and perfects; we must enter in by a strait gate, we must strive through a narrow path; we must seize the kingdom of heaven by violence. We must feel that every thing is at stake, and then we shall be ready to attempt

every thing. Make our way so easy that nothing shall seem to be at stake, and we shall attempt nothing.

It is perfectly true, and Gibbon was right when he said it, — though the unhappy man did it maliciously, —that Christianity gained on the world and flourished, at the beginning, through its very sternness and austerity. It was uncompromising in its strictness, and thus compelled attention, respect, admiration, awe, roused vehement feeling, and forced the homage and allegiance of men. And so it has been in all ages since. The severest forms, the straitest sects, have always had the most resolute followers, have always left the strongest, deepest, and most permanent impressions on the world. The looser sects have had their votaries, but they have not exercised the greatest power, nor done so much to decide the fortunes of the world. Even at the present day, when monkish austerity is wholly out of vogue, and all superstitious strictness derided, yet now, the more of rational severity of doctrine a sect upholds, the more peremptorily it exalts the standard of religious character, the more sure it is to receive the homage of the multitude, and to commend itself to the thinking friends of society and man. This is agreeable to human nature; — so much so, that in all ages and all religions, it has been the pretence of universal sanctity, the show and inculcation of a holier and mortified life, upon which the fanatical or ambitious founders of sects have built their success. The most absurd and ridiculous doctrines have thus been recommended. But what sect is to be named, which has signally prospered by an opposite policy and a looser doctrine? — unless, indeed, by such a degree of laxity as has become freedom from all moral restraint, and has thus destroyed its pretence to be called a religious body. It is idle to think that it may be otherwise now. The world

is said to be more intelligent; society is cultivated and refined. But unless religion be absolutely discarded, men still believe in its exalted purity and holiness; and that form of religion will command the surest homage and do the best work, which shall offer the severest standard of moral and spiritual attainment, alike free from timid concession to the spirit of the world, and from weak tendency to fanaticism and superstition; in other words, which shall succeed most truly in representing the character of Christ; — as bold, as unflinching in principle as he, yet as gentle, as amiable, and as free from all extravagance and eccentricity.

This, I say to those whom I address, is what you are to desire and aim at. You might as well be no Christians at all, as be satisfied with any thing less than this. You might as well abandon all hope of progress and prosperity now, as struggle on hoping to succeed by a power of personal religion less than this. Nothing less than this is the Christian character; and neither human nature, nor the providence of God, nor the spirit of grace, will permit any satisfactory attainments to be made in goodness, by those who would substitute some other standard of goodness for that of the Christian Scriptures. No such attempt can succeed. Nothing but true principle can create true virtue. If you think to render the true principle more palatable to men, or better adapted to them, by diluting it down to the taste of the worldly, you change it from what it is, you destroy precisely that which constitutes its efficiency, namely, its truth, and thus you render it the same in effect as falsehood. Christianity cannot be made this accommodating system without ceasing to be Christianity.

It is necessary, then, to insist on a high and uncompromising standard. It were a poor thing to contend for a reli-

gion which bends to our tastes, conforms to our habits, humors our prejudices, and connives at our selfishness. All these we might have without a religious system, as well as with it. No doctrine is worth a rational regard, which will not *do something* for us, — which will not lift us out of ourselves and above the world, and transform us in the renewing of our minds, and make us fully conformed to the holy, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Pure and undefiled religion, says the apostle James, consists in ***Holiness*** and ***Love;*** it is to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep one's self unspotted from the world." Our faith is worth little to us, if it do not effect this. We may glory in it as we please; it is but a worthless name, if it do not issue in purity and philanthropy, — if it do not work by love and purify the heart. We may argue for it with what power of demonstration we please, we may eulogize it as with the tongues of angels; if it have not wrought in us the great transformation which Christ designed, if it do not prove its divinity by its effects on character, who will heed the tones of admiration in which we laud it? who will credit our sincerity?

I would ask, with all humility and earnestness, whether the community is awake to these considerations. We need not overlook the disadvantages of its position. We may make due allowance for the encumbrances and drawbacks which result from the circumstances under which it has come into existence, and from the heterogeneous character which has been imparted to it by the confusion and troubles of the times. To these circumstances I have adverted on a former page; they are such as to demand a charitable judgment, and candid allowance, which will by many be denied them. But make what allowance may be reasonable, still, if circumstances are unpropitious, there is only the

more imperative call for exertion in order to surmount them, and to do our duty in spite of them. To yield to them, to acquiesce in their neutralizing and palsying influences, to suffer them to put to sleep our zeal and philanthropy, would be unpardonable treachery to a great trust. May we abandon a cause because circumstances are adverse? May we labor in it languidly, for the very reason that vehement efforts are requisite in order to its advancement? We have in view one grand object, — namely, to insure to Christianity its full, its legitimate authority in society and over men. In order to this, we are professedly seeking to extend and complete the Reformation. If there be impediments in any of the circumstances and accidents of the times, they must be strenuously resisted. Every means must be employed, every heart and hand must be engaged. The pulpit must assume a more earnest and stimulating tone, and the press a more determined emphasis, and thus urge home upon the conscience of the community the fervent, bold, persevering expostulations which the sacred importance of the enterprise demands. Every believer must apply himself to the work, and inquire, and talk, and pray, and act, until all arrive at that elevation of the spiritual life, which as yet is only approached, but which must be *arrived at* before a Christian community can be fully worthy of its name.

The signs of the times are favorable. The movement has been long begun, and is prosperously going on. May God speed it! Our churches, our Sunday schools, our books, and our various organizations for mutual aid and charitable action, are gratifying tokens of advancement; they show that the true spirit is at work; they encourage us to labor and pray for its extension, confident that God will hear our prayer, and that success will reward our labors. Let us, then, redouble our labors and our prayers. Let us

contend valiantly for these practical and spiritual achievements. The times are propitious; all things are ready; there is something for every man to do. Every man has, first of all, a mighty work to finish in his own character; — he has, in watchfulness and prayer, to govern and perfect his own spirit, and, in disinterested love, to seek the good of those around him. He has to do his share toward the diffusion of elevated principles, toward giving a Christian tone to the society in which he moves, toward imbuing its conversation, its spirit, its habits, with the purity, gentleness, peacefulness, and love of right, which ought to characterize communities of Christians. Much activity is requisite in order to this end. Very much is to be done to make society what it should be; very much before it will realize the image drawn in the New Testament. It can be effected only by the strenuous fidelity of individual Christians; and no one can be accounted guiltless, who neglects by word and example to do all in his power to hasten the desirable consummation.

But individuals cannot do it alone. Their single action will effect something; but it is their combined action only which can bring about the perfect result. And therefore, if I am asked what is the great lesson of expediency and duty to be drawn from the survey now taken of the position, character, circumstances, and relations of this Christian community, I should answer, the imperious necessity of more general and affectionate union and coöperation in the cause of truth and happiness. I should say, You stand in a peculiar posture; you are pledged to a peculiar work, — peculiar and vast; — you are embarrassed by peculiar and multifarious impediments; — and nothing but the loftiest virtue, and the most devoted faith, and the most energetic and unquenchable zeal, will enable you to carry

through your work, and accomplish what Providence has apparently offered to you to accomplish. Under such circumstances, it is impossible that the single-handed efforts of insulated individuals shall be sufficient. The requisite zeal cannot be kindled, the necessary determination cannot be excited, the needed information cannot be spread, without much communion of mind with mind, much action of heart on heart. You must unite your hearts, your prayers, your strength. You must meet together, and talk about these things; excite, encourage, admonish each other, provoke one another to love and good works. Devotion, in this cold world, needs the cheering stimulus of sympathy; virtue, in this tempting world, needs the strength of public countenance; philanthropy, in this selfish world, requires the support and courage of numbers. You must pray together in social circles assembled for the purpose; converse together of your trials, wants, and duties, of the demands of the truth, of the necessities of the church, of the capacities, glories, infirmities, degradation, and destiny of this immortal nature; and thus enkindle a livelier flame of piety, a warmer zeal for truth, a bolder action for charity, and a more eager aspiration after the spiritual life. In order to this end, I know nothing to be more earnestly desired than the increase of these means of social and mutual religious improvement. The times cry out for them. Wherever adopted, they have been signally blessed. So few have the ability to excite their own souls and set themselves to work, that thousands, when left alone, would sink down to cold, inactive selfishness, who, if placed in frequent contact with their fellow-believers, would become generous, ardent, enterprising promoters of every good design.

But whatever may be thought of the *means* that should be employed, there can be no doubtfulness respecting the

greatness of the *object*. The hints which I have rudely thrown out on the peculiarities, the hazards, the responsibilities of the present crisis might be extended to a volume, and ought to be written in characters of fire. Weakly as they are here presented, they cannot be wholly without force; and if any man of powerful and earnest mind perceives their justice and urgency, I leave it in charge with him to set them forth in their proper strength, and press them on the attention and conscience of the public. If I can rouse one such mind to speak to the times in the prophet-like tone in which they ought to be addressed, I shall feel that I have not ventured to lift my voice in vain. At any rate, I have attempted to perform a duty.

"But all is in his hand, whose praise I seek;
Whose frown can disappoint the proudest strain,
Whose approbation — prosper even mine."

AN

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT KENNEBUNK,

BEFORE THE

YORK COUNTY UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

OCTOBER 24, 1827.

13

AN

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

YORK COUNTY UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION.

I STAND here, this evening, at the request of the Unitarian Association in this county, auxiliary to the American Unitarian Association. I therefore feel that it will be expected of me to direct my remarks to a consideration of that system of faith which it is designed to advocate and support. Any other topics would be foreign to the occasion. And I the more cheerfully address myself to these, because it not only gives me an opportunity of declaring my devout adherence to the simple and glorious truths of our faith, but also offers occasion for some general remarks, which the character of the times seems to call for, and which, I cannot but hope, may be of service to the holy cause of Christ. If, in attempting both these objects, I shall make large demands on your attention, I rely on your candor and interest in the subject, to give it patiently. You must be sensible, brethren, that it is a serious work, and one of no slight responsibility, in which we are engaged. It becomes us to enter upon it with composed and sober minds; looking without passion or prejudice for the truth, and doing and saying nothing which we should be unwilling to have witnessed

and heard by God, and carried in by the recording angel at the last day.

Under this impression I address you as Unitarians, who have associated yourselves for the defence and promulgation of that truth which God has revealed to you in the Scriptures, and which you regard as the light and hope of your souls. I wish, first, to remind you of the reasons you have for so regarding it, and then to offer a few suggestions respecting the temper and manner in which you should conduct yourselves in relation to it.

One or two things are to be observed, before entering on the subject.

First. Various views of the Christian doctrine have prevailed among the disciples of Jesus from the very time of the apostles, all professing to be drawn from their writings, and each having more or less in common with all the others. Of these, you have chosen that which is commonly styled *Unitarian*, because it allows no object of divine worship but God the Father. But in preferring this, be it remembered, we do not reject every thing contained in other systems of faith. Far from it. We hold much in common with those which are even most at variance with our own. We think that the essential points of the Christian system are held in common by them and by us. We therefore, of course, regard them as Christians, professing and following the same Lord. We see no insuperable obstacle to fellowship. We do not exclude them from the same table. We cannot do it — for we have too much in common that is sacred and dear, and we anticipate the day when all separation shall cease, and we shall sit down together in the kingdom of God. This ought to be kept in view in all our arguments respecting those doctrines peculiar to them which we reject, and which we are too apt, very unwisely, to regard as

if they corrupted the whole religion. But it is not so; and no disgust at single points, of whatever magnitude they may be, should cause us to regard with dislike, or treat with contumely, the *whole* of another system.

I would further premise, that, for reasons similar to those which I have just named, if it were possible to state the leading features of the system I advocate without the express contradiction of any other doctrine, I should greatly prefer to do it. But this would be impossible. We cannot prove that God is One, without implying, in the very terms, that some have believed him to be Three. We cannot assert the one, without, of course, denying the other, which is the current doctrine. Whence it is that we have given occasion to those who dislike our opinions, to say that Unitarianism "consists in not believing," which, however, is a very unkind play upon words, and might with perfect justice be retorted. They do *not* believe that the Father is the only true God, that Jesus is but the Son of God, that man is born innocent. They do *not* believe that transubstantiation is a Scripture doctrine, and that the pope is the head of the church. We might make out a long list of denials like these; but we should be ashamed to say that it placed them among unbelievers. To say that the faith of one sect consists in not believing, because it denies the peculiarities of another sect, or of all other sects, is ridiculous in point of argument, and ungenerous in point of application. We rejoice to say, for ourselves, that our system *does* consist in "not believing" the articles of Trinitarianism and Calvinism, *so far as those systems are concerned;* but it consists yet more in *believing all the truths of the Bible, so far as they are concerned.* If we could find Trinitarianism and Calvinism there, we should of course believe them too.

It is not that Trinity is a mystery — that is, if you mean

by mystery what we cannot fully understand or explain. This circumstance may create a difficulty in many minds; but still, if we found it testified to in Scripture as an unquestionable and essential doctrine, we should not hesitate to believe it any more than we hesitate to believe that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, or that God foreknows all things, and that yet man is a free agent. What we want is PROOF. We do not find it written. *We do find that God is revealed to be One; but we do not find that he is revealed to be Three* — neither three "persons," nor three "subsistences," nor three "distinctions," nor three "somewhats," for each of these words has been used to explain the doctrine.

That God is revealed to be One, is a point which I need not stop to prove; for no one denies it. We have this great advantage — that we profess a doctrine on this point which none presumes to question. It would therefore be consuming time to no purpose to quote passages in support of it.

I therefore pass to the other proposition — *We do not find in Scripture that God is revealed to be Three.* This is the doctrine opposed to our faith, and which it is necessary distinctly to disprove in upholding the truth of the Bible. In doing this, we go to the Bible for instruction; and may He, who blessed man with that precious volume, aid us now in so unfolding its testimony, that we may "speak concerning him the *thing which is right.*"

Recurring, then, to the sacred volume, we draw from it the following reasons for disbelieving the doctrine of the Trinity: —

I. *The terms which are necessary to the very statement of the doctrine, and which cannot well be avoided by those who hold it, are not found in Scripture.* The words *Trinity*,

triune — Jehovah Jesus — God-man, are not in the Scripture. We nowhere find the expression *God the Son*, but always the *Son of God;* nowhere *God the Holy Spirit*, but the *Spirit of God*, or *the Holy Spirit*. The expressions *first person, second person, third person, three persons*, are not found. Now, if the very words which are necessary to express the doctrine, are not in the Scriptures, how can we suppose the doctrine itself to be there? If the sacred writers meant to teach this doctrine, how is it possible they should not sometimes have used the words which are now used in regard to it?

II. *The doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere stated in express terms, while that of the sole divinity of the Father is taught in language the most explicit and direct.*

There are only three texts which speak of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in formal connection; and neither of these declares them to be three equal persons in the Divinity. Now, is this possible if the doctrine were true, that the apostles should never name them together but three times, and then not speak of their being one God?

Indeed, I am wrong to say *three* texts; there are only two; for one of the three passages to which I referred is well known to be no part of the Bible; viz. 1 John v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.* This verse, every body knows, was never written by St. John, but has been added to this epistle since his day. John wrote in Greek; but the old manuscripts of the Greek Testament do not contain it. It is found only in the Latin. It has therefore no right to a place in the New Testament, and ought to be rejected. It is rejected by all impartial scholars of every denomination, who have inquired concerning it. There

are, therefore, only two texts which formally name the Father, Son, and Spirit, in connection.

The first is the form of baptism, Matthew xxviii. 19. *Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Here the three are placed in connection. But observe the mode of expression. Does it say that they are three persons? No, it does not say that they are persons at all. Does it assert that they constitute one God? No. Does it say that each is God? No such thing. Does it say that they are all equal? No such thing. Does it say they are all to be worshiped? No. Then it does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. If it neither declares them to be three persons, nor equal to each other, nor each to be God, nor each to be worshiped, then it does not teach the doctrine in question.

The same is true of the other text, 2 Corinthians xiii. 14. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.* It is not here said that each is God, nor that all are equal, nor that all are to be worshiped, nor that all together constitute one. Therefore it does not teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Nay, it virtually denies it. For, as you observe, it does not speak of the *Father, Son,* and Spirit, but of *Jesus Christ,* and *God,* and the Holy Spirit. Observe the difference, and consider what it implies. Would a Trinitarian express himself in these words and in this order, when intending to express his doctrine? If it were *Father, Son,* and Spirit, we should of course regard them as three, and not one, unless expressly instructed to the contrary; how much more where the words run, *Jesus Christ* — and *God* — and the Holy Spirit! So that there is only one text which unites the terms *Father, Son,* and *Spirit,* and that one says nothing of the doctrine of the Trinity. Now, I ask seriously, if it had been

intended to teach that doctrine, is it possible that this should be the case?

It is thus plain that this doctrine is nowhere taught in express terms. You then say, it is perhaps taught indirectly and by necessary implication. I answer, it is impossible this should be, because the doctrine that THE FATHER ALONE IS GOD, is taught in *the most direct and absolute terms that language will admit*, so as positively to put out of the question every other doctrine, and to take away the liberty of inferring any other from indirect expressions.

That this is so, may be seen at once from a few plain and explicit texts, which seem to be perfectly decisive.

1. John xvii. 3. *This is life eternal, that they might know* THEE, THE ONLY TRUE GOD — *and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* This is the language of our Lord himself in prayer. Now, that he was *at prayer*, proves that he himself could not be God; for God never prays. But, besides this, he strongly asserts that the Father *only* is God. It could not be asserted more strongly.

2. Mark xiii. 32. *But of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven;* NEITHER THE SON; *but the Father.* This is the language of our Lord. He declares that he does not know the time of that day and hour; that the Father only knows. Therefore the Father only can be God; for God knows all things.

3. 1 Timothy ii. 5. *There is one God — and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* What can assert more positively than this that Jesus is not the one God?

4. 1 Corinthians viii. 6. *But to us there is but* ONE GOD, THE FATHER, *of whom are all things, and we in him; and* ONE LORD, *Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.* This text is very positive. It declares that

Jesus is our Lord; but that the Father only is our God. Can language be devised which shall declare it more positively?

5. Ephesians iv. 5, 6. ONE LORD, *one faith, one baptism,* ONE GOD AND FATHER *of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* What can the apostle mean by this separation of our Lord from the one God and Father of all, if it do not intimate the Father's complete and unrivalled supremacy? What words can speak it, if such words as these mean any thing else?

I ask you then, seriously, — in the fear and presence of Almighty God, and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, — if these five positive, explicit assertions, that the Father only is God, ought not to set the question at rest in our minds? While we have these plain and intelligible declarations of the divine word, — which never have been and never can be made consistent with the doctrine of three equal persons in the Godhead, — ought we to be turned from our faith by any arguments which might be drawn from more obscure passages? Ought we to take up the opposite doctrine, because it may be ingeniously inferred from difficult and controverted texts? Are we not bound by these plain declarations? And while they stand in our Bibles, uncontroverted and unrefuted, shall it be said that we reject the testimony of God, and depart from the oracles of truth? For myself, so long as the glorious doctrine of the Divine Unity is built up on these FIVE SACRED PILLARS, I must confide in it as the truth of God. If the Holy Oracle can announce any truth plainly and unequivocally, it has so announced this. To my ear, it speaks in language the most unambiguous and the least susceptible of perversion. While I abide by it in these plain texts, I know what I believe, I have the sure word of truth. If I forsake these for the sake of reasoning out another doc-

trine from more difficult passages, I am not sure that my reason may not deceive me in the process, and lead me to wrong conclusions. I am safer, therefore, to abide by the testimony inscribed on these Five Pillars, which I can read as I run.

III. As these fundamental texts most plainly teach the supremacy of the Father, so there are *equally decisive texts respecting the character and offices of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*, which go to confirm it. Let us attend to these.

1. Let us consider, first, *the language which is commonly used respecting our Lord Jesus.* Is it such as implies that he is the same with Almighty God? Take his testimony respecting himself. — "I came not to do mine own will." — "I can of myself do nothing." — "The Son can do nothing of himself." — "The Father that is in me, he doeth the works." — He calls himself "him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent." — He says, "I am come in my Father's name." And after his resurrection he says, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." — Ponder these expressions; weigh these words; and say whether they be the words of one who would represent himself as the independent God.

Take the testimony of the apostles. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God, by signs and wonders which God did by him." — "Appointed to be a Prince and Savior," — "at the right hand of God exalted," — "made both Lord and Christ" — because of his obedience unto death, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name," — in the end he shall "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all." — Weigh these expressions deliberately, and consider whether it be possible

that they should be constantly used concerning Almighty God. But such as these are applied to Jesus in every part of the New Testament.

Consider the terms of faith in him which were required of his disciples. Were they such as implied his supreme divinity? Remember the confession of Peter — "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" — and with this Jesus was satisfied. Remember the confession of Martha — "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God" — and he required no more. Remember the reason which John gives for writing his Gospel — "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Who does John say is born of God? "Whoso believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Who does he say overcomes the world? "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." What was the preaching of the apostles? Look through the book of Acts, and you will find the burden of it to be, "Reasoning from the Scriptures, and testifying that Jesus is the Christ." Now, is it possible, that in all which is thus said of the necessity and value of faith in Jesus, — when believers were to be received into the church, and their immortal interests were depending, — is it possible that they should not have been required to believe him the Almighty God, if he were so? Would he and the apostles have so solemnly assured them that faith in him as the *Son of God* was sufficient, if in truth he had been the eternal God?

2. The same conclusion may be as decisively drawn from *the language perpetually used respecting the Holy Spirit* — language wholly inconsistent with the idea of a divine person distinct from the Father, and equal with him. The Spirit is said to be *poured out, shed, given — given without measure;* men are said to be *baptized* with it, *filled*

with it, to *partake* of it. But this cannot be said of a person. It signifies evidently a divine influence; and that may descend from the person of the Father, as well as from some distinct person. God does not become another person, because he gives his spirit to men. When Paul visited Ephesus, he found certain Christians there, and asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost. They answered, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.* How is this? The Holy Ghost a person in the Godhead, equal with the Father, and essential to salvation to know him, and yet these disciples never heard of him? Impossible; and therefore impossible that it should be a third person in the Deity distinct from the Father, and equal in power and glory. No — the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. Paul tells us what it is, when he says, "As no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him, so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God." The spirit of God is God himself, just as the spirit of a man is the man himself, and not a separate person. And thus the single supremacy of the Father remains unaffected.

3. There are, also, *many expressions respecting Jesus and the Holy Spirit in connection with each other*, which confirm the evidence that the Father alone is God. It will be sufficient to cite these without comment; since the mere reading of them will show how utterly irreconcilable they are with the idea of three persons, alike equal and supreme. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power." — "Jesus received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost." — "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him." — "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by the Spirit that dwelleth in you." — Consider what each of these passages

must mean if the doctrine of the Trinity be true, and you will perceive them to be utterly irreconcilable with it.

IV. Thus far we have looked at the testimony of Scripture as exhibited in particular classes of texts. We may now turn to some considerations drawn *from the general style of the New Testament.* Here we shall find that the doctrine of the Divine Unity so pervades and gives a complexion to the New Testament, that if we could conceive the doctrine of the Trinity to be true, it would alter the complexion of the whole. It would not be such as it is, if that doctrine were true.

This may be partially illustrated from the devotional character of the New Testament; from the conduct of the disciples toward their Lord; from the conduct of the Jews toward him, and toward them; and from the controversies of that age.

1. Look at *the devotional character of the New Testament.* If the apostles worshiped God in three persons, it will so appear throughout their conduct and writings; it will characterize their devout expressions every where. And this the more especially, because they were Jews, — of a people who worshiped God with a strict and most jealous regard to his unity — and they could not have changed their practice in this particular without the change being most strikingly observable. Yet we have no intimation of such a change. They appear to have gone on with the worship of the one God of their fathers, without any alteration in their views. When Paul was converted, he must have passed — supposing the Trinity to be a Christian doctrine — from believing Jesus a blasphemous impostor, to believing him the Lord Jehovah. Is there the least hint of such an amazing change? He speaks with admiration and

rapture of the new views and feelings which he had enjoyed with his new faith. But all the rest together was not so astonishing and wonderful as this, if it had been so. Yet he nowhere alludes to it. Is it, then, possible that it could have been so? that so great a revolution of feeling should leave no trace? He speaks frequently of his prayers. And how? "I bow my knees unto the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "Blessed be the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "Making mention of you in my prayers, that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father* of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom." It is plain, therefore, to whom Paul directed his worship. His epistles contain many doxologies and ascriptions of praise to God. And in what terms? Always to one person, God the Father. And *not once*, either in his epistles or any other writing of the Bible, is a doxology to be found, which ascribes praise to Father, Son, and Spirit, or to the Trinity in any form. The New Testament contains, I think, twenty-eight ascriptions in various forms; and from not one of them could you learn that the doctrine of the Trinity had been dreamed of in that day.

Honor is, doubtless, ascribed to the Savior in terms of gratitude, love, and rapture. It could not be otherwise. How could they, who had seen him, avoid it, when we, who have not seen him, are constrained to love him, and, through our faith in him, to rejoice with joy unspeakable? Ascriptions of gratitude and honor to the Savior who will not render? But this does not prove him to be the Almighty God. When the company around the throne are represented, in the Apocalypse, as uttering a new song of blessing, and honor, and glory, to *Him who sits upon the throne*, and to the Lamb, it never can be understood that they attribute divinity to the Lamb; for he is standing *in the midst of the*

elders, and is praised because *he was slain*. This is not a description suitable to God. And thus, while the New Testament overflows with warm expressions of reverence and gratitude toward Jesus, it is as to the *Son* of God, and reserves all worship of God for the Father. Jesus himself worshiped the Father. The language of the apostles was, "Giving thanks always to God, even the Father, through Jesus Christ." And when honor to the Son is spoken of, it is distinctly stated that it is "*to the glory of God the Father*."

Such is the devotional aspect of the New Testament — an aspect it could not possibly present, if the disciples had practised, and meant to teach, the worship of God in three persons.

2. *The manner in which the disciples conducted themselves toward their Master*, is a certain proof to the same point. Conceive that they supposed him to be Infinite Jehovah, the God of their fathers, whom they had been adoring from their childhood in the strong and awful reverence of the Mosaic worship; and could they have lived and conversed with him freely as they did? Could Peter have rebuked and denied him — Judas have betrayed him — and all forsaken him? Impossible — perfectly impossible. Their whole intercourse with him must have worn a wholly different complexion. It is not in human nature to have lived with one whom they knew to be God, and yet to have conducted themselves as if he were not.

3. The same thing may be said of *the conduct of the Jews toward him*. If they had supposed him to be the God of their fathers, is it possible that they should have treated him with violence and contempt? If they did not suppose it, yet knew that he *claimed* to be such, and that his apostles so regarded him, they must have looked upon him with

horror, as the highest blasphemer. And would not this have sometimes appeared? This is a very strong point. When he was accused before their council, and the charge was blasphemy, they were evidently at no small straits to support the charge. The only evidence which they could at last adduce was, that he had said he could raise up the Temple in three days. Now, if he had ever claimed, in any way, to be Almighty God, or had given any intimation that he desired to be so considered, would they not have remembered it against him at such a moment? When they were eager to seize on the most trifling circumstance, when they sought for false witness long before they could find one, is it to be believed they would pass by such a charge as this? And as they were entirely silent concerning it, is it not certain that he could never have made any such claim?

Nothing can be more decisive than this consideration. Yet it may be corroborated, if not strengthened, by adverting to a remarkable incident in his history.* Some of the Jews, on a certain occasion, took up stones to stone him. He inquired the cause of their violence. They answered, "Because thou, being a man, makest thyself God." To this he replied by a positive denial, and by a full explanation cleared himself of the charge, saying that he claimed to be only "the Son of God." After this they seem never to have repeated the accusation — not even when they were ready to take unfair measures for his condemnation. And yet — strange to say — this explanation, which satisfied his enemies, has not prevented his followers from still insisting to repeat the charge which he refuted — that he, being a man, made himself God.

4. *The conduct of the Jews toward the disciples* proves that

* John x. 31.

they knew nothing of the Trinitarian doctrine. They were active in establishing a new dispensation of religion, and thus drew on themselves the obloquy, abuse, and persecution of their countrymen. Their opposition vented itself, wherever they went, in forms of the greatest outrage and violence. They were accused of speaking blasphemous words against the holy place and the law; of turning the world upside down; of designing to overthrow the religion of their fathers; and were scoffed at as followers of a Master who had died the ignominious death of a malefactor. But they were never accused of worshiping or preaching him as God. Amidst all their enemies' accusations — about the fairness of which we cannot think they would have been very scrupulous — they never brought forward this. And yet, in the eye of a Jew, it must have been the most hateful thing in their system. To teach that that Nazarene enthusiast, whom they had despised and slain, was the very God whom they had always honored and worshiped, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! nothing could have so excited them against the new religion and its active propagators. Yet it never formed the ground of their opposition. Is it not, therefore, certain that the apostles never held such a doctrine?

5. Of the same nature is the following argument. There arose several controversies in that age, especially with those Jews who had been converted to Christianity. Some of these are treated of in the Epistles. But it is very observable, that amongst the questions which thus arose, and required explanations from the apostles, there is no record of any question or controversy respecting the object of worship. And yet, if the new religion was adding two new objects to that of the old, this would have been, to a Jew, by far the most important, most interesting, and most perplexing of all the peculiarities of the gospel. No such

doctrine could have been added to the ancient faith of the Jews, with whom the Unity of God was the proud and distinguishing tenet, without its occasioning some controversy, either with those who received or those who persecuted the new faith. Yet no such controversy took place; neither is there the slightest appearance, in the New Testament, that any objection, difficulty, or doubt, arose in any quarter upon this ground. Is it not impossible, then, that any such doctrine should have been taught?

V. I have thus gone over a few heads of the scriptural argument respecting the Divine Unity.

But in speaking thus decidedly respecting the testimony of the Scriptures, we must not be understood to assert that there is nothing in this volume which seems to favor the Trinitarian doctrine, or that its advocates are altogether without plausible support. Far from it. There are, unquestionably, many passages of difficult interpretation, and many expressions, more or less direct, which may be construed to assign supreme divinity to the Savior and personality to the Spirit. But there are two considerations which go to show, that, although this be the case, yet the certainty of our doctrine is not in any degree affected.

1. The first of these considerations is, that the texts, which speak most directly and plainly on this subject, are decidedly Unitarian. These we have already quoted, and no forms of speech could be selected more explicit and unequivocal. But this is not the case with those texts which are quoted in support of the Trinity. Not one of them states the doctrine in so many words. The doctrine is made up by inference and argument from separate texts. Many of these are among the most perplexing and difficult passages in the Bible—passages which have tried the skill of

interpreters in all ages, and have received a variety of expositions. Now, it is plain that where such passages are cited in proof of the Trinity, the value of the citation must depend on the correctness of the criticism; that is, on the soundness of the reasoning by which the text is interpreted; that is, the doctrine is thus far supported by the power of reason simply. Need I say how different from the support which our principal texts give to the doctrine of the Unity? Thus it appears that the doctrine of the Trinity is mainly dependent for its support on processes of reasoning; processes by which the most plain and decisive texts are made to bend to the less plain, and the easy are interpreted by the difficult. We think it safer not thus to trust our power of interpreting dark places, but to take the plain texts for our guide, and solve the dark ones by them. And if there be some which still remain obscure, and which we cannot satisfactorily clear up, we should esteem it safer to leave them as they are, unexplained, than to give them a meaning, and then find ourselves obliged to conform the plain texts to them. In the one case we should think that we followed our own power of logic, and in the other the simple word of revelation.

2. Again. The *assumption*, or *supposition*, which is resorted to in order to make these plain, decisive passages agree with the Trinitarian doctrine, is of a character to confirm us yet more strongly in our opinion. This assumption is, that Jesus Christ possessed two perfect natures, the human and the divine; and that he sometimes speaks and acts as man, and sometimes as God. Now, if this were expressly asserted in Scripture, it would be very well. But it is not; it is not pretended to be expressly taught. It is *argued* that it must be so, because it is a supposition which serves to remove difficulties, and to reconcile the language which is

used respecting the Lord. But we have no right, it seems to me, to reason out for ourselves a doctrine of such magnitude as this for such a purpose; especially when it *creates* difficulties quite as embarrassing as those which it removes — it seems to me far more so. For look at the case a moment. The assertion is, that our Lord speaks and acts sometimes as God, and sometimes as man. Accordingly, when we argue thus — "he declares that he does not know the day or the hour — he says that he can do nothing of himself — he prays to God" — it is then replied, he says these things *as man;* he does not, *as man*, possess supreme power, or know the future; and as man he prays; but still *as God* he is omnipotent, and omniscient, and asks no blessing from on high. This assertion, it is true, may support the doctrine of the Trinity, and may evade certain difficulties which Scripture throws in its way; but does it not create a more serious difficulty than it removes? Let any man candidly examine the subject, and say whether it do not. For — I speak it reverently, and my flesh trembles while I utter it — does it not attribute to our Lord a very strange way of speaking, and something of a deceptive manner, to say that he *does not know* when he really does know, and that *he cannot do* what he has infinite power to do? For, if he were God, it would not be *true* that he did not know the future; it would not be *true* that he did not his own will, and did not work miracles of himself. And therefore I beg to ask — in the name of all that is reverent and good — *whether we can find it in our hearts* to advocate a doctrine, which can be supported only on a supposition which exposes the blessed Jesus to the charge of untruth and deception; a supposition, too, which would render it impossible, if carried to its full extent, to believe any thing which he may say; for one has only to assert — He spake this in his human nature, and

therefore it was not so — and then all his testimony on religious truth may be entirely set aside.

No, brethren, let the plain declarations of our Savior's word be enough for us; and let us rejoice that we hold a faith which allows us to believe every word that he said, just as he uttered it, without the necessity of explaining away a syllable, on the plea that he sometimes spake in one character, and sometimes in another.

I have thus stated a few of the reasons which are directly and indirectly furnished by the Scriptures for holding the doctrine of the undivided Unity of God.

I present it to you as the clear and unquestionable doctrine of Holy Writ, and therefore to be held with firm and decided faith. The more confident our persuasion that it is so, the more highly shall we value it, and the more shall we rejoice to see it extended and honored. If we feel that he whom we call Master and Lord, the author and finisher of our faith, who lived and died that he might secure to us the blessing of our religion, and whose kingdom we desire to spread with its holy and beneficent blessings, — if we believe that *he* taught and inculcated this doctrine, — then, as his disciples, we shall desire that it prevail, for it is his truth.

It is, therefore, *as Christians*, and *for the sake of the Christian religion*, that you are entreated to hold fast this form of sound doctrine, and to do what you may for its encouragement and progress.

It is a duty to your religion. If, as we conscientiously believe, the doctrine which we oppose has no good foundation in Scripture, — if it has grown up from the admixture of some philosophical opinions brought into the church ages ago, — then we cannot but regard it as a most unfortunate misapprehension of the truth; and it becomes as

imperiously a duty in us to expose it, as it was in Luther and the reformers to assail the corruptions of the Romish church. Allowing that it produces less practical and palpable evils, yet if, as there is reason to believe, it has occasioned skepticism in many reflecting minds, and been an obstacle to the progress of the gospel; being, moreover, the corner-stone of certain other doctrines called Calvinism, which we cannot honestly regard as agreeable to the perfections or the word of God; in this case, I say, it becomes a DUTY — from which we can no more discharge ourselves than from the duty to speak the truth and deal uprightly — to strive to remove the error from the world. Our religion demands it of us, that its divine features may be recovered to their pristine beauty. Our fellow-men demand it of us, thirsting, as they are, for information and light on the most interesting subjects. Our own reputation demands it of us, being, as we are, in the situation of the apostles, a sect "every where spoken against" — every where reviled as enemies of the Lord whom we love — branded as unbelievers in that revelation which is our soul's joy, and which Unitarians have done as much and as ably as any to defend against the assaults of infidelity — and accused of seeking covertly to overthrow that blessed book which is our charter of peace, and the anchor of our soul's hope. Brethren, I do not see how we can answer it to our conscience or our God, if we hold our peace and refrain our hand in this matter. I love concord as well as any man. I lament from my soul the alienations and divisions of the Christian church. I deprecate the spirit of hostility and wrath which rides abroad on the tempest of controversy. But still I say, that when we see a doctrine which the united force of all other sects is engaged to blacken and overwhelm, against which a fierce war of extermination is waged, and no quar-

ter given even for charity's sake, — a doctrine which *we* hold to be God's truth, revealed in his word, and testified by the teaching and blood of his Son, — then, I say, *we have no right*, for the sake of quiet, to shrink from proclaiming and toiling for it. If it were our own cause, we might have an option. But being, as it is, the cause of God and his Christ, the apostles did as rightly in forsaking their Master when men rose against him, as we should do in forsaking this his truth when men rise against it. No; let others deny it, and betray it, and forsake it and flee, in the time when the multitude execrate and insult it. I trust that we shall not dare to prove false to it. Let the scribes, and chief priests, and the elders of the people, exert their power, and prevail even to its apparent extermination. It may be put down for a time, and buried, as its holy teacher was, in the tomb. But, like him, it shall burst from the power of its enemies, and rise again — rise, in triumph and dominion, to exalt its empire on an everlasting rock.

It was, therefore, an auspicious day for the truth, when the American Unitarian Association commenced its labors. Its labors were needed; and we already find that they have not been in vain. Its publications have been eagerly called for and welcomed, and the spirit of inquiry is still increasing and extending. It only needs that the minds of its friends should be alive to its importance, and furnish to it the necessary means; and it may be an efficient instrument of truth, under the blessing of God, by supplying the community not only with books, but with living teachers. In order to this, much is yet to be done. Auxiliary associations must be multiplied and strengthened. It is gratifying to find their number increasing daily. I congratulate you, brethren, on your readiness to this good work. You have joined a laudable and needed enterprise. Let not your

hands slacken. Go on persevering, and seek to do more and more. Cause our religious doctrines to be not only published, but circulated; and ask those who speak evil of them, whether they have ever studied them, or even read the most common explanation of them. Think yourselves well employed, when you thus contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and seek to restore the true doctrine of Scripture.

But this is not all which your faith requires of you. You are called upon to testify in its behalf, and recommend its claims by a corresponding temper and life. In contending for the faith, take heed that you do not lose the *spirit*, of the gospel. Hold your opinions in the exercise of a candid and charitable temper toward all. This is a cardinal point in the Christian character. Resist strenuously and devoutly all temptation to regard with censoriousness or illiberality those who differ. Remember what has been so forcibly illustrated in your hearing to-day, that "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." * You infringe that spirit whenever you speak unkindly or sneeringly of those whose doctrines you may dislike, whenever you "judge your brother, or set at nought your brother." "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth;" and we must *all* stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

Give to your doctrine, also, the support of a good life. The gospel is a doctrine "according to godliness;" and unless it lead to "godly, righteous, and sober lives," it might as well be a corrupted as a pure doctrine. Consider, therefore, that you do little for the cause of Christ by barely

* Dr. Lowell preached an ordination sermon in the morning from these words.

contending for it, unless you also live for it and adorn it. This caution is especially needed, because it is our misfortune to be thrown into situations of peculiar exposure. We stand in opposition to sects which make extraordinary pretensions to piety and exemplariness of Christian manners. As we are compelled to protest against their erroneous doctrines, we are easily displeased with all the appearances associated with them, and are hence in danger of being driven to the opposite extreme of a careless life. This is a real and natural tendency. One extreme begets another. By all means, be persuaded, brethren, to guard against it. Suffer not yourselves to be driven to carelessness of life, or contempt for serious appearances, by what may seem the unreasonable austerity and sanctimoniousness of others. Remember that there is a rational medium; and, as rational men, holding a sentiment which you know to inculcate that medium, and which thoroughly abhors all licentiousness, both of thought and of practice, cherish diligently an ardent piety, and a strict, unbending, though unostentatious, exactness of morals. Be religious men; and be not afraid to appear as such. Otherwise, you are false to your principles, and obstruct the cause which you really desire to advance.

Is there not reason to fear that we are too insensible to the importance of this consideration? I have no fear for the *argument* in behalf of our faith. So long as the Scriptures exist, and man's mind is free to study them, it must be seen, more and more clearly, that they testify of One God and his impartial grace. But I do sometimes fear from the folly and incaution of its friends. If it is to be lost to the world, and fade away again in darkness, it will be because its friends are not wise enough to do away the prejudices against it; because they are too confident in its inherent

strength and native divinity to think that their own carelessness can hinder its triumph, or their own characters in any way affect the prosperity of what God has made his charge. And, while too many suffer themselves to be more influenced by their dislike of harsh doctrines, and their desire to be wholly rid of them, than by their scriptural views of duty; while they dread to be righteous *over much*, and forget that it is possible to be righteous *over little;* and are reluctant to make exertion or sacrifice for the sake of conscience and truth, — is it strange that such persons are the occasion of keeping alive prejudices against the faith we hold? Will men believe it to be "the doctrine of God our Savior," unless its professors take heed to "adorn" it?

In saying this, I do not forget the many characters of illustrious virtue, and humble, exemplary piety, which we rejoice to see around us, formed under the influence of the pure and life-giving truth — characters which bear the very impress of Heaven, and exhibit, in bright colors, the excellence of the doctrine which gave them birth. Neither do I forget that the state of mind of which I have just been complaining, arises, in great measure, from the peculiar circumstances in which we live — circumstances for which sufficient allowance is not usually made, and which at once account for what we lament, and teach us where to look for the remedy. Similar circumstances of religious agitation and change, when important revolutions of opinion were going on, have always been attended with similar evils. The period of the Reformation was such a season; and how was it then? Let the historians of the day answer. They tell us, with mortification and grief, that one of the conspicuous consequences of that noble attempt to emancipate men from their old, corrupt system, was the introduction of more lax notions and habits of life, and the loosening of the bonds

of morality.* The Catholics triumphed in this, as a demonstration of the falsehood and wickedness of the reformed system. The reformers bewailed it as a calamity and sin. But we see that it grew out of the *circumstances of the times*, and did not spring from their faith. So it may be that, in the present day, a somewhat similar complaint is made in regard to *our* opinions, and exulted over as proof of their falseness; — not, indeed, that the complaint is carried so far, for much worse consequences were attributed to the early Reformation. But what there is, arises from similar circumstances. We are acting over again, in some sense, the part of the reformers. We are going through a similar trial and contest of opinion, and are liable to be ill affected and driven to adverse extremes, just as they were. If the evils of that day were no demonstration that they were wrong, the less evils of this day afford no proof that we are wrong. They do not result from the doctrine, but from the times. They should be no ground of despair to us, nor of

* "The irregular and immoral lives of many of the professors of the gospel gave their enemies great advantages to say they ran away from confession, penance, fasting, and prayers, only that they might be under no restraint, but indulge themselves in a licentious and dissolute course of life. By these things, that were but too visible in some of the more eminent among them, the people were much alienated from them; and as much as they were formerly prejudiced against Popery, they grew to have kinder thoughts of it, and to look on all the changes which had been made as designed to enrich some vicious courtiers, and to let in an inundation of vice and wickedness upon the nation." — "They were men in whose hands things grew every day worse and worse, and whose arrogance and other disorders our chief reformers were forced in some measure to connive at, that they might not provoke them to retard the work," &c. — *Burnet's Hist. of the Reformation*, b. iv., where more may be found to the same effect.

exultation to others. But we should be put on our guard, that we may apply the remedy. It is our duty vigilantly and strenuously to oppose these unhappy tendencies of our situation, and demonstrate, not only the truth, but the holy power of the doctrines that we love.

And why should it not be so? Why should any circumstances seem an excuse or apology for carelessness in practice, or contempt of religious appearances? Is it not pusillanimous to be seduced from paying due honor to the principles you respect, to be driven into apparent or real dislike of a devout demeanor, and self-denying principles and habits, by what you think the unnecessary austerity and ostentatious zeal of others? Jesus Christ, the first preacher of the doctrine you profess, set no example of shrinking from the utmost openness of strict and devout living. The apostles, the zealous professors of the same gospel, felt no difficulty in living wholly and devotedly for their religion. They inculcated the most severe and thorough strictness, even though they had seen the disgusting ostentation of the Pharisees, and found many among their followers, as there are amongst us, who used their liberty "for a cloak of licentiousness." Let us know that it would be an honor to follow their example. Let us know that it would effect more for the conversion of man and the spread of the truth, than all the books we can circulate, and all the arguments we can array without it. It is to little purpose that we prove, by abstract reasoning, the truth of the doctrine; that we boast of its purity; that we demonstrate its excellent tendencies; and show, by incontrovertible argument, that it *must* make the best Christians. Let us show that it *does* so Let us prove our faith *by our works*. Then men will be convinced. Then it will be said, God is in you of a truth. And the gospel, in which we rejoice, will go forth in its holy light,

to bless and redeem the world. Amen. So let it be! God hasten it in his time! And let us, brethren, be "fellow-workers with God." It is an honorable employment. Let us be engaged in it not only with zealous, but with pure minds; for they who would put a hand upon the ark must have written on their garments, Holiness to the Lord. They who fight the battles of the Lord of hosts must not be aliens, but subjects and friends, having his seal upon their foreheads, and their hearts purified by the truths they would teach. God grant that we may be such, and so honored as instruments to accomplish his excellent work — "that we may see the good of his chosen — that we may rejoice in the gladness of his people — that we may glory with his inheritance!" And unto Him who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, — to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. AMEN.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE DUTIES OF THE PULPIT AND THE PASTORAL OFFICE.

AN

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO THE MEMBERS OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL IN CAMBRIDGE,

OCTOBER 18 AND 25, 1830.

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

TO THE

CAMBRIDGE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL.

On meeting for the first time in this new relation, our thoughts are naturally directed to the object for which this office has been instituted, and the purposes which it is designed to accomplish. These are indicated with sufficient distinctness in its title. Leaving to other chairs the discipline which is to form theologians, and furnish the teachers of the church with the requisite learning, it is the office of *this* to regard them in the light of preachers and pastors, and train them to the eloquence demanded for the pulpit, and the prudence and affections that must guide in the parish walk.

The connection thus suggested between the eloquence of the pulpit and the pastoral care, is real and natural. These two branches go together and sustain each other. The minister is the better preacher for having his heart warmed by intercourse with his hearers in private; and he goes to them in private with the greater influence and effect, because he carries with him the sacredness and sanction of the pulpit. The full power of the Christian ministry can be known only where both departments are exercised with faithfulness; and he entirely errs, who fancies that he may

neglect either, and yet command the best success in the other. It is to the union of the two that we must look for the efficient and complete minister. And I think that we cannot better introduce our labors in this department, than by attempting to illustrate this important truth.

In order to this, it may be well, first of all, to state our idea of the terms we are using.

When we speak, then, of ELOQUENCE, as an essential requisite for the preacher, and as something *to be taught*, we do not mean that high and singular gift, that extraordinary combination of powers and attainments, which the books describe as the property of the orator; for men so splendidly endowed are but few in an age, and the church, if it must depend on them, would soon perish for want of advocates. But so far from being necessary, it is not certain that this highest eloquence is advantageous, or even desirable, in the pulpit. At any rate, it is not this which our institutions propose to teach, or which our students aim to acquire. What we propose is, simply, the power and habit to select judiciously, arrange clearly, and express forcibly and fervently, the topics suited to the pulpit, and to utter them in that distinct, correct, and pleasant elocution, which shall insure for them the attention of the people. Thus much is capable of being learned; and this is what we mean by pulpit eloquence, when we propose it as something to be attained.

By the PASTORAL CARE we understand that duty toward individuals and families, which consists in personal acquaintance and intercourse for the purpose of knowing the character and condition of the flock, that so the minister may be ready to seize opportunities of usefulness among them in either their temporal or spiritual relations, — by giving counsel, instruction, reproof, encouragement, consolation,

according to situation and character. We do not regard it as consisting in what appears sometimes to be understood by the term, — the custom of simply visiting as a friend, or making calls from house to house; much less ceremonious and party visiting, or social tea-drinkings. Some ministers have much intercourse with their people, or rather with a certain portion of them, in this way; but this is not doing pastoral duty. Social visiting is well. It has its uses; indirectly, its religious uses. But pastoral visiting has *directly* its religious uses. The pastor goes "from house to house," like the apostles, with an expressly religious object; and he executes it, not only in sympathizing with the joys and sorrows of his people, and administering advice in sickness, and comfort in affliction, but also in communing with them on their religious interests, and applying himself to their spiritual ignorance, trials, doubts, perplexities, and progress. It is to this that we especially refer, when we speak of the advantages he must derive as a preacher from the discharge of his duties as a pastor.

The importance and necessity of the connection between the labors of the pulpit and of the pastoral charge, may be discerned, first, *in the nature of the object to be accomplished by the ministry*. The ministry is designed to act on the characters of men, through the truths and motives of the gospel, so as to bring them in subjection to religious principle, and thus fit them for everlasting happiness; not simply to give instruction in religion, or gain assent to the doctrines of revelation, but so to press them upon men, that their *characters* shall be made conformable to them. Now, character is a very complicated thing, dependent on a vast variety of circumstances and influences. Of these the pulpit can never furnish but a small proportion; and if none other be exerted in behalf of truth and Heaven, the character of most

men will be formed more from the prevalent influences of the world, than the holier agency of the ministry. To render this agency sufficient, it must be brought into operation at other times and in other relations — amidst the actual pressure of the circumstances and trials of life. And this is precisely what is attempted by adding the watchfulness of the pastor to the eloquence of the preacher.

The necessity of this junction may be seen, again, in *the nature of preaching*, taken in connection with *the character of the congregations addressed.* Preaching is instruction and exhortation addressed to a promiscuous audience of men and women of every rank, order, and age, with the view, as I have said, to *influence and form their characters.* And who does not know the extreme, the almost insurmountable difficulty, of so addressing a promiscuous assembly, that all shall understand and be affected? Such are the varieties of situation and education, of intelligence, disposition, and habit, of modes of life and thought, experience and trials, moral advancement and religious attainment, that a preacher may speak most instructively to some, while to others he is talking unintelligibly and idly. How necessary, then, that he have other occasions and methods of access to them, than the formal communications of the desk! And where is he to find these, but in the opportunities of the pastoral office? How otherwise can he reach, or know whether he reaches, a large portion of the minds committed to him?

We shall further discern this necessity, if we reflect that the advancement of religion, and the diffusion of its blessings, are just in proportion to its action upon individuals, and its effect upon single characters. We are too ready to regard Christianity as designed to operate on society, and accomplish a great work for the progress and reformation of

the world. Even when we look at a single parish, we are too apt to see it in this general view, and address it as a community, rather than as a collection of individuals; in consequence of which, our preaching is general and vague, our aim uncertain, our exertions too little direct and concentrated, and our success doubtful and partial. Now, this barren generality in preaching, proper views of the pastoral office would do much to correct. We should then come down to individuals; our great object would be the improvement and welfare of certain persons, for whose particular case we are concerned. We should understand their wants, trials, and dangers, and be anxious to apply to them the faith and power of the gospel. We should think our work best done, when we found that the very persons with whom we hold daily intercourse in the common walks of life, have been led, one by one, to think of God and duty, and prepare for the retributions of a future world. This action on individuals would tend peculiarly to warm our hearts, and enkindle a generous zeal within us. It would animate us in our studies. It would give life, particularity, and directness, to our preaching; and it would prove the most effectual way of producing that general improvement which we so desire to witness in society.

Such being the necessity and importance of the connection between these two branches of ministerial action, let us proceed to consider the support which each furnishes to the other.

I. And, FIRST, of *the support which the pastoral care furnishes to the pulpit.* This may be seen in relation both to the actual labors of the pulpit, and the preparation for them.

1. We will begin with the preparation for them. Noth-

ing is of so much consequence here as *the spirit in which this preparation is made.* If it be done simply as the inevitable routine of a professional calling, or as an intellectual exercise, or an exhibition of talent, or a rhetorical display, it is evident that the moral state of the preacher's mind is altogether unfavorable to the production of a truly religious effect. He has no proper apprehension of the subject he is treating, and, not entering into it rightly himself, he cannot rightly represent it to others, nor attract to it their regard. We are not to wonder that those who thus go to the pulpit miserably fail of all valuable influence, and that religion becomes heartless and dead under the management of men who have no higher aim than to get through their stipulated task as hirelings. Religion is so much a matter of sentiment and sympathy, that the universal rule of oratory is in no other profession so true as in this,—that the most efficient speaker is he who most throws his own soul into his eloquence. Now, to enable him to do this — to prevent the weekly duty of preparation from degenerating into a mechanical performance, or selfish ambition from taking place of the hearty disinterestedness of a Christian preacher, the pastoral office is an essential aid. The man who is familiar with the situation, trials, and wants, of those whom he addresses, who goes up to the pulpit from their firesides and their chambers, — full of interest in their characters, and sympathy with their condition, — feels that he is not meeting a congregation in the abstract, but men and women whom he knows and cares for, and who are waiting to catch from him something which will suit their necessities, and be for their guidance and improvement. He cannot sit down, and prepare for such an assembly a dry dissertation in metaphysical philosophy, or a learned criticism on an unimportant text, or a sentimental essay of which he has studied only the

ornaments and graces. But, urged by natural and spontaneous emotions, impelled by the current of his own affections, with perfect directness, and that best of all energy which results from simplicity of purpose, where all is real, and nothing affected, artificial, or forced, — he will prepare an address suited to their actual condition, and with a single view to their profit. As Butler observes there is a certain *unity*, so is it equally true there is a certain *power*, "in the words of one who writes with simplicity and in earnest" — a power which, perhaps, is nowhere seen more strikingly contrasted with weakness, than in the case of the preacher who prepares a set discourse on religion without any acquaintance with the actual religious wants of man, and as an intellectual exercise alone, and of him who, glowing with sympathy for his flock, thinks only of imparting instruction and pressing upon them expostulation, as a friend with a friend, or a parent with his children.

2. Beyond this general effect, which lies in the state of his affections, the pastoral relation aids the preacher's preparation by directing him in *the profitable choice of subjects*. It is quite obvious that in the vast fields of theological and moral truth, there is room for infinite variety of choice. If one select from this variety at random, or at the suggestion of the moment, he may, indeed, frame excellent discourses on most important questions; yet if they be not suited to the character and wants of the hearers, he will be a thoroughly unprofitable preacher. So also, if he follow the bias and taste of his own mind, and the train of his favorite studies, he may treat great subjects, and treat them well; but while he gratifies himself, he may neither please nor benefit the congregation. The only just rule, by which to decide among the ten thousand subjects and texts which may suggest themselves, is their fitness to do good to the particular class of

persons addressed. And what will enable one to determine this point so correctly and judiciously, as the intercourse of the pastoral relation? He who holds that relation knows what instruction is needed by them and useful to them. He is at no loss to decide what classes of topics he should treat. They are pointed out to him in his daily walks, and in the character and condition of all around him. When he sits down to the labor of composition, he finds them springing up in his mind, suggested by some interesting event which has occurred, by some question he has been asked, by some conversation he has held, by some character he has observed; and in treating them, he *knows and sees* the very individuals who will drink in his words like thirsty men, and rejoice in the refreshment and strength he imparts. What a prodigious help has he here! No languor and vacuity of mind to be roused and inspired, no unwilling drudgery, no heartless task-work; but warm, stirring, interesting occupation, — such as he only knows who can unite the delightful glow which attends a successful intellectual exercise with the affectionate serenity that waits on him who is engaged in the moral improvement of others.

3. The same remark holds good in respect to *the mode of treating and illustrating his subjects.* His pastoral relation will help to give an air of reality and suitableness to the whole method of discussion, and to the topics of argument and elucidation. Instead of being compelled painfully to seek them, and bring them by effort from afar, he will find them ready at hand, springing up all around him. He will not reject them because they are familiar. He will not be fastidious about their grace and beauty. He will speak to his people freely, as he would to one who should privately ask advice in his study, — anxious neither for profoundness of views nor elegance of diction, but only to

make himself understood and felt. He will thus be led, I might almost say instinctively, to the most efficient and persuasive course; while another, studying out the same subject without the same application to real life, and with no guide but his scholastic rules of composition and the formal dicta of logicians and rhetoricians, would go astray into useless subtilties and artificial declamation.

This is especially true in regard to that class of topics which concerns the action of Christian truth on the mind and heart, and the exercises of the soul in its religious course. He that would preach profitably must exhibit these faithfully and truly. He must treat of the emotions and conflicts that are going on within, and the strong trials and glorious aspirations of our spiritual nature, as things of fact and experience — an experience which, in its full extent, embraces every subject of thought and duty, affection and devotion, hope, fear, faith, and action, which can interest a pious mind, and make up the history of a responsible being. And this he must do in such manner as shall come home to the business and bosoms of those who hear, shall awaken a response in their hearts, shall reflect their image to themselves, and minister to them the needful guidance, admonition, consolation, and peace. For such a work, how valuable the preparation of the pastoral walk! It sends him back to his study fresh and glowing from intercourse with minds into whose recesses he has been admitted, inquisitive for truth, anxious for heaven, disturbed with doubt, shaken with remorse, trembling with despondency, overwhelmed by affliction, depressed by misfortune, struggling with temptation, or rejoicing in faith and hope; and he is prepared to treat the topics I have mentioned with a feeling and reality which study never could have imparted, with a clearness

and force which meditation and books never could have supplied.

I know no cure for false rhetoric like this. And whenever I witness the grandiloquence of the sophomore in the pulpit; when I hear there the flashy common-places of flowers, and rivers, and clouds, and rainbows, and dews; when I listen to the empty music of periods which are rounded only to be harmonious, and the tricks of speech which perform no office for the sense, — then I say that all this miserable foppery, as false to good taste as it is to the souls of men and the truth of God, could never have been committed by a man who walked faithfully among his people, caring for their actual wants, and anxious to feed them with knowledge and understanding. What lawyer, I ask, who makes his client's cause his own, would dare to put it in jeopardy by such idle flourishes at the bar? And, therefore, beyond all instruction from books or masters in the truest eloquence, — that is, the eloquence which reaches men's souls, and, being adapted to their state, moves and changes them, — I would send a young man into the experience of actual life. I would say to him, "Interest yourself in these people; be governed by the supreme desire to bring them to God, in the love and acknowledgment of his truth; and though you may not hear yourself extolled for beautiful figures and accomplished address, you will have the satisfaction of subduing many hearts to thoughtfulness and peace, who shall reward you with their gratitude at the resurrection of the just."

4. Again. The pastoral office aids the preacher in respect to *the delivery of his discourses.*

The best delivery is not that which conforms minutely to certain rules; nor that which in vulgar estimation is accounted eloquent, — the loud, sonorous, and showy. It

is that which best brings out the meaning of the discourse, and leads the hearer so directly to the sentiment, that the manner of its utterance fails to attract remark. This, at any rate, is the desirable delivery for the pulpit. Why is it so rare? and what are the greatest obstacles in the way of attaining it? First, undoubtedly, the ill habits created in childhood by reading what we neither understand nor care about; and next, the continued habit of reading mechanically, as we have been accustomed, without throwing our natural feeling into our manner. Every one knows how difficult it is to remedy the constrained and unaffecting utterance which has thus come up with us from the dame's school. Lessons, criticism, example, painful practice at self-correction, may do something, especially if we will always read pieces in which we feel interested, and practise in an excited state of mind. To read or recite in dull, cold blood, may only help to dishearten us, by showing how difficult it is to overcome our faults. It is working with blunted tools. An edge is given them to work keenly and happily only by excitement.

But however much may be done in this way, I know nothing so likely to remedy the faults alluded to, and give birth to a *real* manner, as the consciousness that we are doing a *real work*, — in the midst of those who are seeking our opinions and advice, and whom, as acquaintances and dependants, we are desirous to serve, and with a devout sense upon our minds of religious responsibility. This is precisely the situation of the pastor. The reality of his office, like that of the parental relation, thrusts aside all that is factitious, and imparts the air and tone of nature, truth, and feeling. Let him give way to the impulse of his situation, and nature, truth, and feeling, will make him eloquent — that is, will make him effective. The fetters of his unnatural schoolboy habits will relax and drop off. He is

once more a man, independent and self-moved. The drowsy, dronelike monotony of indifference, and the artifices of affectation, and the graces which seek applause, — all fly before the business-like sobriety of actual zeal. He is no longer a sounding declaimer, eager only for admiration; no longer a heartless drudge at an irksome task; nor a timid aspirant for fame, shrinking embarrassed from the eye and censure of critics around him. He is simply a friend among friends, and he speaks right on. He has a business to do, and he forgets every thing but to do it. If any thing will break down the disastrous habits of early and scholastic life, and teach him or betray him to speak like a man who is in earnest, and who, therefore, can touch other men, it is the consciousness of sustaining a relation like this.

5. There is still another department of public duty, on which the pastoral relation exerts a most valuable influence; namely, *the public prayers of the sanctuary*. These, no less than the preaching, — in order to be right, edifying to the congregation, and therefore acceptable to God, because going up from hearts which assent to them as they are uttered, — must be suited to the congregation; not only in phraseology and style, but in sentiment and topics; suited to them, not only in general, as they are men, possessed of a common nature, common wants, infirmities, and sins, but particularly as they are *such* men, with their own peculiar characters, situation, and exposure. It is perfectly obvious that a devotional exercise, adapted to affect the minds and express the souls of one class of men, may be wholly unfitted to excite or represent another. A preacher may skilfully study the proprieties of thought and diction, and diligently select and arrange the addresses with which it becomes mortal man to appear before his God, or he may, following the train in which his own mind runs when he pours

himself out in private worship, dwell on those sentiments which are most affecting to himself in *his* state of religious experience and progress. In each case, the prayer, in itself, may be proper and excellent; yet, as designed for the use of a given congregation, it may be barren and vapid. Without careful adaptedness, there can be nothing in it of that warm and fructifying vitality by which public prayer should communicate life to the souls of the worshipers. And who can understand this essential adaptation like him who lives among those whose mouth he is to be; acquainted with their temporal condition and spiritual wants, and familiar with their modes of religious thought and expression; who knows, therefore, what sentiment will find an echo in their hearts, what words will kindle a devout flame, and what there is already established within them, to which he must appeal, if he would carry them on to higher spiritual attainments? He would fear that he should not lead them to pray at all, if he dealt only in the general language of piety, or in those peculiar views which satisfy and delight himself. He seeks to enter into their minds, borrow their associations, speak from their sentiments, allude to their trials, temptations, and sorrows, describe and specify their condition, wants, and infirmities. He would thus, in a manner, take them by the hand and lead them to the very mercy-seat, that they may pray themselves; while a stranger, being unable thus to sympathize with them, would be like the ancient priest, who presented an offering of which the people could only be spectators.

6. The preacher's *success* is favored by the relation which he bears to his hearers as their pastor.

The writers upon rhetoric insist much on the importance of conciliating the good-will of an audience. They lay down various rules for beginning in such a manner as may

disarm prejudice and win favor, — knowing how little is to be hoped from the highest eloquence, if received into unwilling or prejudiced ears. But for the affectionate pastor this is already done. He is in the midst of acquaintances and friends. Individuals, doubtless, there may be, cold, incredulous, inimical. But, as an audience, he addresses those whose confidence he possesses, and who have put themselves in his power. Even in the case of those who doubt or disbelieve the doctrine he delivers, or whose sinful minds rebel against his entreaty and warning, — his personal connection with them affords the most propitious of all circumstances for bringing them to a *willingness* to listen and be improved. But, as regards the auditory in general, — from him, whom they know, not only officially, as a preacher of righteousness, but privately, as a man of integrity and charity; from him, whose tested purity and sanctity render him as venerable at their firesides as at the altar; from him, entreating them in Christ's stead, — they receive counsel, exhortation, and reproof, as they would from no one else. At his expostulations they are less likely to cavil and demur. His statements and style they are less prone to criticize and debate about. By his entreaties, they are more easily persuaded to self-examination. His instruction is, consequently, more salutary; he is enabled to address them with a freedom, confidence, and particularity, which nothing but the intimacy of his relation to them would warrant. Hence we have often known a discourse received with favor at home, which has given offence when preached to a congregation abroad. Hence, too, we may believe, that, as a general rule, religion will most flourish where the pulpit is not too frequently given up to strangers; but where the steady administration of truth from the same trusted lips, forbids gossiping criticism, unprofitable comparisons, and the itching ears

which the apostle long ago condemned as idle and mischievous.

Thus it is that the pastoral relation augments the circumstances propitious to the preacher's success. It is a great truth, that the same instruction and advice are interesting and useful, or the opposite, — are received with welcome, or rejected with contempt, — according as our minds are affected toward him who speaks. This is the foundation of the ancient adage, *Neminem oratorem esse, nisi virum bonum.* And hence the pulpit must always gain an increase of power, from the circumstance of its being occupied by men who are known and beloved of those who sit beneath.

Of course I do not speak without exceptions; and it will readily occur to you what prodigious effects have sometimes been wrought by the preaching of strangers in strange places. This has been owing, in part, to the extraordinary powers possessed by those persons, and in part to the influence that novelty always exerts over minds of a certain character, which sleep under whatever is familiar. But there can be no doubt that, upon the whole, the best, the most wholesome, the most permanent effects of religion are derived from its uniform and settled operation. Its most salutary agency is, like that of the sun in perfecting the harvest, steady, equal, gentle, and perpetual. It is upon this idea that the regular institutions of the Christian church are founded. And however sleepers may be sometimes most effectually awakened by the warning cry of a stranger, the whole flock is best watched and fed by regular and stated shepherds; for which reason it was, that, when Paul and the apostles had gone through the world, and waked its slumberers into life and faith, they then "ordained elders in every city," to watch for the souls which they had converted.

II. We come now to speak of *the favorable influences exerted by the pulpit on the minister's labors as a pastor.*

1. The advantage which it gives him is mainly this — that it clothes him with a sanction and authority which he could derive from no other source. Something of the ancient reverence, which belonged to the prophetic character among the Jews, attaches itself, even now, to the simple man who stands up in the Christian church as the herald of the New Testament. He is the proclaimer and expounder of the divine will. The majesty and awfulness of the message passes to him who is commissioned to utter it. Wherever he may be, his image is associated with the pulpit, — that venerable place, consecrated to the denunciation of sin, to the proclamation of supernatural truth, and the invitations of divine grace — to which the mass of Christians look up, as did the Jews to the mercy-seat, whence the oracles came forth. There it was that the people of his charge first saw him. Their earliest associations with him are as habited with the sanctity of that place — as a man at prayer — as a man pleading for souls — as separated from earthly objects, interests, and feelings, and wrapped up in subjects of infinite concern. This feeling always clings to him. It is never wholly separated from his image in their minds. They receive him, wherever they meet him, as bearing his office with him. In their houses, and at their tables, he is still, like the prophet in the cottage of the Shunammite woman, "THE MAN OF GOD."

What an advantage may he thus carry with him into every office of Christian love! In going about like his Master to do good, what power! He can reprove as no other man can do, and where no other would presume; for there is a deference to his standing and office, which feels that to resist him might be to resist Him who sent him. If

divisions and strife arise, there is none who may so effectually step in, as a peacemaker, to reconcile and heal; for he is perceived to be only doing what he has declared from the pulpit to be a Christian duty, and thus practising the precept which he has often enjoined upon others. In affliction, too, and calamity, he can speak comfort as none other can. The same sentiment, the same words, — as the experienced pastor has often been surprised to observe, — are worth more from his lips, and go more deeply into the sorrowing heart. He is thought to be more familiar with the true and celestial springs of consolation; and the mourner seems to hear a higher Comforter speaking by his voice, and saying, "Peace! be still!"

Undoubtedly, great prudence and discreet wisdom are necessary to secure, perfectly, all the advantages of which I speak, — especially in an artificial state of society, like that in which we live; and we may find instances in which they have not been obtained. But it must be because the minister has neglected and forfeited them. It is impossible that they did not once exist, and that he had not the opportunity to secure them. Many ministers seem not to be aware of the power which they thus possess. Many, through delicacy, do not call it into action as they might. Some fancy that the ministry ought to rely solely on personal character for its influence, and that no advantage whatever should be taken of the dignity which unavoidably appertains to the office; while many wield its influence with a fearful and tyrannical sway, which proves, at once, how real it is, and how immense would be its action for good, if employed only for legitimate and salutary ends. For such ends let it be sacredly used, as a most responsible trust. You cannot, if you would, descend from the holy eminence of the pulpit and mingle with men unmarked. If you could, you ought

not. And the distinction and power which you gain from this circumstance, may be, and should be, cherished among the most valuable and beneficent talents in your possession.

You will not understand me as urging you to expect or claim authority and influence, on the ground of your office alone; or to take advantage of the natural reverence of man for his priests, to assume a clerical superiority, independent of your personal acquisitions and character. These must be conformable to your high place, or they will only sink you the lower in merited contempt. This is neither the age, nor country, nor state of society, for ignorance and ambition to lord it over God's heritage, by any claim of office, or any pretence of a divine commission. All, therefore, that I have now intended, is, to state strongly — I do not know whether more strongly than the truth — the actual sentiments of men, which offer you a singular facility of doing pastoral good; a facility of which you are diligently to avail yourselves; and this the rather, because the tendency of the times induces many ministers to fling away all advantages to be derived from their function, and because there is a tendency in the state of society to destroy the distinction between clergy and people. Now, as far as I have stated it, this distinction is salutary, and these advantages legitimate and desirable. Beyond that point, I would be the last to plead for them, — certainly the last to rest on them, as if they could answer instead of personal worth, intellectual fitness, and religious devotedness to duty. Indeed, my next remark is, —

2. That the pastoral office gains strength from the pulpit, because he who is gifted to fill that place bears with him the credit of talents, learning, and religious disinterestedness. He has been educated for his trust, by long retirement for study and discipline. His mind is stored with

various information, and in most circles within his parish he is regarded as farther advanced than others in all the branches of essential knowledge. Of course, then, he has all the advantage which such attainments and reputation always afford a man for influence with his fellow-men. With many persons, this, and not his office of religious teacher, will be the actual ground of respect; and with all, any inconsistency between his character and profession, any obvious worldliness of mind, selfishness of purpose, improper ambition, and habits of thought, feeling, and pursuit which indicate that God and Christianity are only secondary objects of interest, will destroy the influence of both his life and teaching; while simplicity and disinterestedness, conscientious and zealous devotedness to his benevolent function, and a life evidently modelled on his Master's, will secure to him a real, deep-seated power, which office and learning alone never could have given. Thus the ability to preach implies attainments and character, which secure deference and regard in the pastoral relation. But these will be at once changed into neglect and contempt toward him who claims them from the office he holds, and not from his fitness and fidelity in discharging it.

3. The pulpit gives aid to the pastor, by making impressions which offer occasions for personal intercourse, and thus create opportunities for addressing men individually on their religious concerns.

The work of impression and improvement which is begun by the pulpit, can never be completed by it. Let the word be preached with ever so much discrimination, fidelity, and particularity of application, it is impossible that it should be made at all times to suit the peculiar emergencies of all characters, and impart to each variety of spiritual necessity the exact direction and counsel which it requires. It is by

attention to his flock in private, that the pastor is sure of being able to "give to each his portion in due season." And the best opportunities to do this are the result of his public preaching. For however general it may be, if it be faithful, it will reach some hearts, will touch some consciences, will excite some minds to thoughtfulness, penitence, and prayer. Where this has been done, how is the way opened to easy, natural, confidential communication on the deepest interests of man and the most affecting truths of God! How is his access to these topics facilitated, and how acceptable are his instructions and counsels! He finds ears opened to him which had hitherto been closed, and an earnest welcome to suggestions which formerly were received with, at best, a cool and repulsive assent. And it was the cry he had uttered in the pulpit, which thus "prepared the way of the Lord, and made his paths straight."

Hence, for this reason, he keeps an open and vigilant eye to discover the effects of his preaching. He follows Orton's advice, to converse with his people, not about his sermons, but on the subjects of them. He seeks to know the instances in which he has awakened a sense of responsibility, or stirred up a spirit of inquiry, or excited a thirst for knowledge. He desires to ascertain in what cases he has been misunderstood, and in what he has given offence; in what instances his expositions have failed to give satisfaction, and in what they may possibly have excited doubt. He may then be able to explain more clearly the points that were left in darkness, and pursue still further the subject of discussion. He may put an end to the offence, before it have become inveterate by time; may correct the misunderstanding before it have done its work of mischief or alienation; may answer the inquiry, before it is forgotten in the bustle of the world, and direct and fix the nascent interest in things

divine. These are interesting offices of pastoral oversight, the occasions for which he owes to his public preaching. How much of what falls from him on the Sabbath might be lost, if it were not thus followed to a ripe result! How much of the precious seed of the word may be wasted, where there is no one to cultivate and guard its growth! And how valuable to the pastor, that public proclamation of the gospel, to which he is indebted for these propitious opportunities of communicating with men on their eternal interests!

4. These views may be still further illustrated from the relation which he sustains to the young of his flock. These have been truly styled "the hope of the ministry;" and toward them his most devoted and shepherd-like interest must always be awake. Over their early impressions and growing characters he is to watch. Their parents he is to aid and prompt in the arduous task of training them to purity, faith, and the love of God. In his parochial rounds, they are to be peculiar objects of his inquiry and attention. In the common schools, in the Sunday schools, and by his own personal instructions, he will labor for their knowledge and piety. And as he has been solicitous that they should receive at first the baptismal sign, he will be anxious to guide them onward to a suitable preparation for the other Christian ordinance, and introduce them to a worthy commemoration of their Lord. In all this charge of their religious progress, how much does he gain by being the teacher in God's house! How favorable is this circumstance to the success of his efforts! Who may find an easy way into their young hearts like him whose image is interwoven, in their thoughts, with all that is reverend and affecting in the worship of God, the history of Jesus, and the proclamation of things eternal? Who else may so guide, influence, mould them, as he who descends from the most sacred of

places and of duties, mingling the affectionateness of an elder friend with the authority of venerable office?

I have now said what I designed, to show the mutual dependence and reciprocal influence of the eloquence of the pulpit and the pastoral care. It is the union of these which forms the complete and effective minister. It is such ministers that we desire to send forth to the churches; "eloquent men and mighty in the Scriptures;" who shall carry into the pulpit the best gifts of utterance and persuasion, and the most affectionate zeal for the salvation of men; and who shall move amongst their people with the kindness of friends, and the cheerful gravity of men of God. That *you* may become such is to be the object of your and my unceasing and solicitous study.

You are called to be PREACHERS and PASTORS. It is for this that your whole discipline is to prepare you. The learning and exactness of the study, the musings and devotions of the closet, the watchfulness and discipline of daily life, — all are to combine in fitting you for the solemn function of preaching God's truth to a sinning and slumbering world, and of guiding and counselling men in the most interesting concerns of the human soul.

Let me exhort you, then, to look forward habitually to the day when this charge of souls shall be actually in your hands, and to consider by what preparation you shall be able to acquit yourselves in it satisfactorily and acceptably. Contemplate the pulpit, from which you are to speak to GOD in behalf of the congregation; and realize with what devotion and elevation of spirit you should be imbued in order rightly to carry up the general offering of praise and supplication — the pulpit, from which you are to address men on the loftiest themes, and awaken their dull hearts to the spiritual things from which a sensual world is constantly enticing

them; and realize with what holy earnestness of deep conviction, with what suavity and vehemence of utterance, with what clear and energetic reasoning, with what intimate knowledge of scriptural truth, of providence, and of human nature, you must be filled and glowing, in order worthily to execute so vast, so various, so delicate, so responsible a trust. Bring this thought before you. Keep it before you. Weigh it, feel it, understand it. You will then cheerfully devote yourselves to the severest toils, which shall be requisite to accomplish a thorough preparation.

Look also to the pastoral relation. Consider what it is to be the religious counsellor of hundreds of souls, in every most trying and momentous crisis of their being. Consider what prudence you must study, what wisdom and discretion you must cultivate, what readiness, what patience, what forbearance, what affection, what zeal; above all, what need there is of a spiritual habit of mind, a fondness for religious thought, a heart always alive to sympathy with man, and ready to rise in devotion to God. You will then comprehend with what diligence you are now to cultivate your affections, and live as men of faith and prayer, that you may not then be strangers to the most spiritual part of your labors, but may go to them as an accustomed and welcome occupation.

Understand, therefore, the importance and dignity of the work you are to undertake. There is no more momentous trust committed to human hands. There is no higher honor to which man may aspire on earth. Office more responsible no one can bear. Duties more weighty and trying no one can assume. It is the office, trust, honors, and duties, which once were borne by the Son of God. To esteem them lightly, to prepare for them sluggishly, is the extreme of folly and of sin. It is to seek and deserve disappointment, failure,

and contempt. It is to dare the displeasure of Heaven, and darken the prospects of the soul. Be persuaded, then, to set your standard high. Act from elevated and disinterested principles, with a lofty aim and a vigorous perseverance. In attainments and in character press on to the ALIQUID IMMENSUM INFINITUMQUE; or, in words more solemn and exciting still, "to the mark for the prize of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus your Lord."

It is to help you in this arduous, and almost fearful preparation, that I have come among you. I truly feel that I could receive no more interesting or important charge. And what power God has given me, what skill and knowledge experience may have taught me, may be more than occupied in the responsible task. I will do what I can. May God grant his blessing! I only ask of you to second my exertions, and give me your prayers.

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DUTIES OF YOUNG MEN

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It belongs to the system of education at the present day, to pay great attention to the training of youth in preparation for its participation in the action of society. There is great wisdom in this, because much of the energy and enterprise, on which the prosperity and advancement of the world depend, is found among the younger men. The spirit, the hope, the sanguine enthusiasm, the fearlessness of consequences which are essential to great undertakings, are to be found in those whose hearts have not yet been chilled by disappointment, and to whom experience has not read lessons of doubt and caution. Some great things can only be achieved by a sort of desperate struggle, which none will venture who have lived long enough to be aware of its desperateness. Some evils never will be removed if their removal depend on those who have become accustomed to them, for they then become less burdensome than the toil of removing them. The old are naturally conservative; they wish to keep things as they are; they have ceased to hope any thing better; innovations disturb them as unwise and ungraceful. The young fancy every thing might be better;

they take counsel of their imaginations and their dreams; they think every thing to be possible, and are impatient to introduce changes which shall bring to pass all their visions. The middle aged unite much of this caution of the elders with much of this ardor of the young; experience has given them wisdom, and years have not changed that wisdom to timidity; they love to act and desire to improve, but their action is not that of impulse, and they judge of improvement more by lessons of history and real life than by the suggestions of a sanguine imagination. For these reasons it might be best if the affairs of society could be wholly intrusted to them, if its security and peace for the present, and its steady advancement toward something better, could be committed to their mature wisdom and energetic but thoughtful experience, subject to no revolutionary violence on one side, and to no lethargic contentment on the other. But as these wise counsellors in the prime of life could never exist excepting as they arose from the ranks of the young, and as their wisdom could be acquired only by their experience in earlier years, it is impossible that the guidance of the public weal should devolve on them alone; the younger must have a share with the more mature in order to their right introduction to the cares and trusts of manhood, and the aged should be retained among the counsellors, that their caution may keep the balance right, and prevent the undue preponderance of hasty impulses and ill-considered projects.

There is always a tendency in the ranks of the young men to press forward and seize prematurely the active stations in society. The fire of ambition and enterprise consumes them; they are impatient of tardy action. In the great procession of society they can ill bear to be kept in the rear rank, and be obliged to school down their quick step to the deliberate

movement of their elders in the van. In various ways this tendency has always exhibited itself. If there be a great political revolution, youths are among its leaders; if a career of military glory which sets the world in flames, it is a young man that commands it. Alexander was in India at thirty, and Napoleon in Italy at twenty-six. In arts also, and letters, how many have done their amazing works, and gained their imperishable renown, before the dawn of middle life! The fame of Raphael, the king of painters, of Byron, of Burns, of Lucan, and even of Newton in science, is the fame of early manhood.

The remarkable calmness and wisdom which marked the conduct of the American revolution was owing to the circumstance that its leaders were men in mature life, of sober experience and ripe wisdom. The author of the Declaration of Independence was younger, but he had seen thirty-two summers; there were few so youthful; and their undue impetuosity, if they could have been impetuous in so grave a cause, was more than balanced by the sobriety of the elder men, who, like so many Nestors, gray in years and patriotism, were joined to the councils which Chatham eulogized. The same is observable in the army. The commander-in-chief, never a young man in the sense of being rash, was then arrived at the sober age of forty-four; the chiefs next to him had outlived the boyishness which counts war a frolic, and the young men who came forward during the struggle in the bloom of youth, like Lafayette and Hamilton, became imbued with the prevailing temper, ingrafted the sobriety of years on their own ardent stock, and thus the war was saved from all predominance of folly, disorder, and caprice. It took from the first, and held to the last, the character of a grave performance of a serious duty.

During the last twenty years, in which there has been a

new development of the active energies of man, and society, in every direction, has been extending its efforts for an increase of knowledge, wealth, power, and whatever constitutes the good of civilized man; when the moral has been as active as the political, and plans for the spiritual well-being of the race have been as enthusiastically formed and pursued as ever were expeditions for personal aggrandizement, — during this period, the universal stir has imparted a peculiar impulse to the young men. The circumstances of society in this country call them out, at an age which in other lands confines them to a state of pupilage, into the various fields of manly competition, invite them to become, not only actors, but leaders, and put them at once into places of responsible trust. The world was once astonished to behold the first place in the British empire bestowed upon a man of twenty-one years; but extraordinary emergencies always stand by themselves, and are exempt from the common rule; here and there arises a man who is a phenomenon among men. The tendency amongst us has been to put an end to these exceptions, and to fill the trusts of church and state with young men. This feature of our condition has been a subject of frequent animadversion by foreign observers, and deserves attention from ourselves. We cut short the period of education and precipitate that of action, and lessen the time of preparation that we may begin that of labor; in consequence of which it is to be feared that the members of our acting community are, on an average, less completely accomplished in the desirable attributes of mind, than those of the same rank in other civilized lands. Our daughters leave school at sixteen, before they can have gained any adequate discipline of the intellect, or established a taste for profitable reading. Our sons are taken from school at fourteen or fifteen, pressed into business which

allows them no time for further study; and they arrive at manhood, wealth, respectable connections, perhaps a leading place in society, with nothing more than a schoolboy's learning, and without the tastes which should adorn their station. Or, if they pass through the course of education at our colleges, it is still such a course as brings them early, and oftentimes but half educated, into the professions, with only here and there one who can stand in fair competition with the scholars of the older countries; while many of them, who should have devoted their education to the all-important purpose of promoting the intellectual improvement of their country, shut up their books at the call of business, and, tempted by the prospect of speedy wealth, plunge into the active bustle of life. In a word, such is the opportunity for youth to appear and act as men, that they are fairly in danger of leaping at once from childhood to manhood, and, by taking into their own hands the whole work of society, bring upon it something of the evil which Solomon suggests in that well-known exclamation, "Woe unto thee, O land, when thy king is a child!"

In this state of things, it is no wonder that many thinking and patriotic men have addressed their counsels of political and moral wisdom to the young; for in truth never were the young so important to a country, nor so perilously situated; and he who can succeed in impressing on their minds an adequate sense of the responsibility and dignity of their situation, so that they shall feel their place truly; be awed, but not depressed, by its responsibility; be excited, and not intoxicated, by its grandeur and promise; be made wise to seize and bold to use its vast opportunities without rashness, reverently deferring to the cautious judgment of the experienced, and yet not deficient in the energy which is requisite to go forward as the times demand, — that man will be their truest friend, as well as a benefactor to his country.

The political, moral, and religious destinies of this country are all dependent on the practical opinions which the coming generations shall carry with them into the action of life; and there are certain hazards to which our prosperity and character are exposed, concerning which they ought earnestly to be put on their guard, and solemnly instructed to provide a seasonable resistance. On one or two of them we would take the present opportunity to enlarge.

It has often been remarked — and the remark is doubtless founded in truth — that the principle of personal and political equality, in being acted out, operates to produce undue familiarity in intercourse, and a disregard of those outward forms of courtesy which render the intercourse of society pleasant and agreeable. The ancient air of deference with which gentlemen met each other, the decorous uncovering of the head, and the tone of respectful regard which marked the address of the younger to their seniors, — these have departed; and young men scarcely out of their teens speak of their elders, and to them, with the same familiar tone and colloquial freedom of good fellowship, with which they meet their own companions. We may well rejoice, that what was irksome and frivolous in the artificial forms of other days, has been banished; but it is lamentable that it should ever be allowed to carry with it the natural expression of respect, and still more so, to erase from the heart the disposition to give honor where it is due. Yet one cannot altogether avoid the apprehension, that to this extent the age has gone in far too many instances. It is to be admonished and recalled. Respect for age is a natural sentiment, implanted in the human soul for wholesome purposes, in all ages and nations esteemed and inculcated. Respect for superior virtue, for high station, for eminent services, is also a natural sentiment, which can be dispensed with only by

so far unhumanizing the community which abrogates it. All nations have found it necessary, in all ages, to cherish it; the human being demands it, and cannot live happily in society without it. Hence the promptings of nature have been followed in the establishment of chiefs and kings, standing apart from the people. Hence the gradation of ranks among the ancient Egyptians, among the Eastern nations in all ages, among the European nations, even the most civilized and free, down to the present time. Let it be allowed that in all these the institution has been false and mischievous; that man has been thus debased, and deprived of many of his noblest rights, — still it remains true that they were founded in an original suggestion of human nature. Those who gained the ascendency may have abused it; but the original sentiment was a noble one, and the multitude exercised a state of mind virtuous in itself, though the objects on which it rested might be unworthy, and the forms of its exhibition degrading. To look up with awe to real greatness, to express deference for true wisdom, to bend in reverence to that which is high, and is appointed to administer the essential functions of society, so far from being a weakness is a virtue, so far from a debasing is an elevating trait of character. The child stands thus in the presence of his father, or we brand him as a monster. The man stands thus in the presence of his Creator, or we shudder at his insane daring. He that honors his parent and worships his God with the deepest devotion, is always accounted as doing what is most becoming MAN to do. He thus manifests that he knows his place, and that he may be trusted. And just in proportion as any other beings or institutions stand toward him in relations similar to those of his parent or his God, something of the same honor is exercised toward them. The old man, the good man, the public benefactor, the

magistrate, the law, the state, each is an object of respect. Nay, he recognizes in every individual a brother of the parent whom he reveres, a son and image of the God whom he adores, an equal subject of the law he honors; and therefore he honors all men. He feels that none are to be treated with disrespect; if equal, then equally entitled to consideration with himself; if in each a portion of the national sovereignty resides, then that sovereignty is to be honored in the person of each; and he can no more be guilty of, than be willing to receive, that indecorum of speech or of manners which implies that a man has a right to be rude.

This deserves to be seriously considered. If it were, men would perceive it to be altogether base, worthy only of a grovelling mind, to thrust the principle of political equality into the face of every man he meets, and thus abolish the courtesies of life. Yet it has been strangely permitted, even where it would be least expected; men forget their moral duty in the selfish application of a civil right. As we once heard it well described, the interpretation of the republican principle seems too often to be, "I am as good as you;" hence disrespect and rudeness; whereas the true interpretation is, "You are as good as I," — which would lead to universal deference and politeness.

It is not too much to say of the tendency we refer to, that it leads to unfaithfulness toward the institutions of the country, and puts in jeopardy the high expectations which have been founded on them. We have here nothing which is venerable for its antiquity, no sacred relics of former days, no ancient institutions of government or religion, which bear on their front the hallowed impress of departed ages, and are inseparably mingled with the earliest recollections and associations of our souls. All is new. All has been created as it were by ourselves, within the memory of the

present generation. Our constitution, our government, our whole political organization, are the work of our own hands, and the work of our own hands we will not worship. We eulogize and flatter them as fond parents do their children, but as for reverence — no, they are our creatures; we are the sovereigns, not they; they can be changed at our pleasure, and shall be whenever we see fit. We therefore hold them in as little respect as we please. And with this habit of viewing the constitution, the law, and the law-makers, what are we to anticipate? Is it strange that we have seen what we have seen? Even the most sacred thing among us, — that which attaches to itself more nearly than any thing else that deep feeling of inviolable devotion which is termed Loyalty, — even the constitution of our government, the subject of so much verbal panegyric, overladen with so much violent and fulsome eulogy, — yet how easily, in more than one instance, both in the national and the state governments, has party spirit been able to set it at defiance, and erect itself into a power above it! How have men sworn to defend it, yet laughed it to scorn, when it stood in their way! How have even legislators been bold enough to contradict it by their enactments! Then the law, — which if it be not supreme in the land, alas for our liberty and security! which if it be not king, then is nothing to be looked for but anarchy and chaos, — have we not seen this sacred guardian set at defiance by the people in violent assemblies? and that, not only, as might sometimes be expected to occur, in season of sudden exasperation and passionate excitement, but deliberately, systematically, under the guidance of men of high name, large influence, reputed patriotism, confessedly appealing to a power above the law, and in place of the law, as something better than the law; while meantime the over-awed press held an om-

inous and dreadful silence, not daring to rebuke the vile conspiracy against the people and their rights.

When such things can be, there is occasion for serious alarm. If the law can be despised, if the constitution can be crushed, if men of influence can be found capable of asserting, and acting on the assertion, that there is an authority in the land higher than these, the country is undone. Now is the season to look to it, while this fearful development is yet new, before the disorder has spread and corrupted the whole people. And it is the young men of America who are especially interested; it is for them to recover and restore the respect for law and right. Let them see to it that they early cherish in themselves, and in all around them, a heartfelt, unwavering, all-submissive respect for the law; neither by word nor by act let them cast a breath of ill-will upon it, or raise in themselves or others a willingness that it should be evaded. If there be a bad law, (as unhappily the rage for legislation and the insufficient reverence for law have but too often caused evil enactments,) seek its repeal; submit implicitly while it exists, at any inconvenience, at any loss; it will be to your honor to suffer for the general good; but seek its repeal by righteous means, and always in such wise as shall prove your profound respect for law itself, and your deep sorrow that so great a wrong should have been done to its majestic name, by the usurpation into its place of an unrighteous statute. Do thus the utmost in your power to maintain the inviolable sacredness of that authority without which there is no security to the nation, and to enshrine the image of it in the hearts of all the people.

These remarks may be extended to another point — the manner in which the men who hold office in the government shall be regarded and treated. It is true that very

unworthy men may be thrust into places of high dignity; but it greatly concerns the well-being of the community, that the *place* should at all events be honored, and the man in it for the sake of the place. Like a bad law, he should be displaced by the regular forms as soon as possible, but, like the law, should be honored until displaced, not for his own sake, but for the sake of the institutions and the people. Dishonor him, and you wound the general good, by casting contempt on an office essential to be honored. The incumbent cannot dishonor the office; it is unsoiled by his baseness, it is uncontaminated by his corruption; he leaves the seat as he found it, pure and revered, unless the offensive missiles, hurled at him while he filled it, may have desecrated it in the thoughts of the by-standers, and the office thus become an object of contempt, because associated with the contempt cast on the man. Who, therefore, can regard with unconcern, or with any feelings but those of mortification and alarm, the reckless tone of so large a portion of the political press in all that relates to public men and their public life! Let them be exposed to free observation and severe judgment; it is right. Never let a base man usurp the place of a public functionary, or prove himself untrue to his trust, without being exposed. But let this be done with the calm and grave tone with which the judge on the bench pronounces sentence after the process of impeachment, so as to save the dignity of the office, and the honor of the mistaken men who raised him to it, while it unmasks the falsehood of the man. Then good might be done; the press would exercise a wholesome and needful moral control. How is it now? We are obliged to say, that to too great an extent it is a mere instrument of party. It is a mouthpiece to spread unfounded calumnies, without regard to character, truth, or consequences; it catches up and propagates any report which may prove injurious to an obnoxious statesman,

or welcome to the mass of gossiping readers; it imposes, with the most enormous and untiring impudence, on the credulity of the people, and throws the facts and opinions of the times into such confusion, that a sober inquirer can hardly hope to arrive at the truth. And this press is nearly the governor of the community! The journals which are less violent, less false, more principled, calm, and fair, are so much more tame, that they have comparatively a small circulation, and the mass of the people is left to the mercy of a large body of self-constituted, irresponsible editors, whose whole care it is to make such journals as will attract the readers of their party, and secure a good livelihood to themselves. Is there not thus a perpetual warfare waged against the spirit of patriotism in the people? Can our institutions fail to fall into disrespect? We call on the ingenuous and fair-minded young men, who are coming up into life, as yet unsoiled by the low contests of party, and still glowing with their native love of the pure and the true, to discountenance and rebuke this unholy brood. It is for them to set a higher example; to make it dishonorable, either to edit or receive a gazette which is indifferent to truth, good morals, and the fair reputation of public men. Let them unite with one voice, and declare that the profanation we complain of shall go no farther; that the good name of every son of the common mother is sacred, until forfeited by crime, and shall not lie at the mercy of political writers, whose trade is defamation. We call on them to give to their country a generation of fair-minded and generous politicians, and thus secure to her that respect and love which cannot live in the bosom of her children, if her image be forever associated in their minds with what is low and selfish.

A part of the duty of the rising generation to their age

and country, relates to the cultivation of the mind, the advancement of knowledge, and the spread of those elegant tastes which refine and exalt. "Onward" is the watch-word of the times, and it should be applied to this as well as to other subjects. Onward the nation is going, with astonishing rapidity, in population and wealth, and consequently in the means of promoting any object which shall seem desirable. It is infinitely desirable that this wonderful external progress should be accompanied by a corresponding progress in education and refinement, so that when we shall equal the older nations in wealth, and exceed them in numbers, we may not be mortified by inferiority in science, literature, and the civilizing arts. Now, the danger is, that the progress of the mind will lag tardily behind the growth of the outward prosperity; it certainly will do so, if effects correspond to causes, unless our youth are trained in a supreme regard to the higher objects of man, and sedulously cultivate in themselves the love of letters and refinement. Thirty years ago, Mr. Buckminster, filled with the generous spirit that belonged to him, and with an apprehensive regard to the tendency we are adverting to, wrote home from Europe, as an apology for purchasing so extensive a collection of books, when his own life was so uncertain, "I consider that, by every book I send out, I do something for my dear country, which the love of money seems to be depressing almost into unlettered barbarism." This is the spirit that should animate our young men. When they see how the whole people is abandoned to this idolatry, how many gifted minds are decoyed by the glittering temptation from the quiet pursuit of letters and the cultivation of knowledge, they should awake to a sense of the peril that threatens. They should understand how the true greatness of a people does not consist in its external prosperity; that it

never can be secure or happy without knowledge. Let them give their most strenuous effort to maintain the truth on this point. Let those, especially, who have had the benefit of the highest education, know that to them is committed a solemn charge in this respect. They are constituted by Providence guardians of this portion of the public weal. They are made watchmen over the intellectual interests of the people. They are to be overseers of the instruction of the land, and in no small part its educators and guides. Let them know that they descend from their lofty position, when they forsake this honorable vocation, and go out from the temple of science and the halls of instruction to join the throng that is toiling for mere wealth and power. They are not wanted in the counting-room or the market-place. There are enough without them to do the active work, and carry on the commerce of the world, and fill the offices of state. But they are wanted in the seats of education. More teachers in all departments, more sober, enlightened, judicious educators of the people alike in the humbler schools and in the higher seminaries of science, morals, and art, are pressingly needed; and he does more service as a patriot who puts his books in a knapsack, and walks away with it to some frontier settlement, and lays the foundation of a solid education in that infant town, than he who, by enterprise, adventure, or speculation, becomes the nabob of a city. A thousand men have the education and the talent for the latter, for one that is fitted for the former, or has the character requisite to accomplish it.

We address a similar train of remark to all. For the sake of their own happiness and dignity, for the sake of their country and fellow-men, let all cultivate the love of letters, and intellectual accomplishments, and a spirited interest in the cause of education. It often happens to men

of active vocations, that they cultivate no taste for reading beyond that of the newspapers; they therefore never arrive at any enlargement of mind, or systematic and extensive knowledge; they have no resources if health and fortune fail them; in sickness and in age they are forlorn and desolate; the mind and its treasures are nothing to them; even the book of life fails to command their lethargic attention; nay, in instances not a few, it has been known that when a sudden reverse of fortune has left such men without resource, they have cast themselves into the arms of death. Such instances should plead trumpet-tongued for a juster treatment of the immortal mind, which demands to be fortified against evil, by tastes, resources, and habits corresponding to its nature and destiny.

But let them be warned against being led astray by the temptations presented by the present condition of literature. The multiplication of books offers equal facilities, at the present time, for the cultivation of the most beneficial and the most injurious taste in reading; and while the land is deluged with worthless publications at inconceivably low prices, the exposure of unwary minds to corruption and waste is very much like the temptation to intemperance, which lies at the corners of the streets. One may read continually without being benefited. A large proportion of the popular works which lie in every body's way, lauded in the newspapers like patent drugs, and offered at every corner like cheap spirits, are little else than poisonous stimulants, exciting the appetite, creating a craving for indulgence, and debilitating instead of nourishing the mind which resorts to them. We could as soon recommend our young men to feed at the confectioner's, and drink at the bar of a second-rate tavern, in order to ruddy health and manly vigor of body, as send them to the circulating libraries in order

to a clear and strong mind. We warn them against the effeminacy of soul to which this feeding on the popular literature of the day will inevitably lead. The resources of classic English literature, both of former times and of the present day, are abundant in books of solid merit, and equally interesting with the trivial volumes just referred to; and it is pitiable to find so many resorting to the society of the foolish and corrupting, in preference to that of the strong and elevating. However we may lament the vast proportion of worthless trash published and republished by the American press, we cannot deny that a large mass of valuable works also are continually brought before the public; so that no one need complain that wholesome nutriment is not at hand; it is his own fault if he select the deleterious. And let the rising generation but use a wise and discriminating judgment; let them reject whatever a pure moral and literary taste disapproves; let them take advice of men competent to give it; let them be guided in the selection of books, not by the purchased panegyric of flippant editors, or the advertising puffs of interested booksellers, but by the deliberate recommendation of some judicious friend, or the impartial testimony of some trustworthy literary journal, — and the evil so much complained of will cease to exist.

We do not mean to repeat here what is so often and so urgently said of the importance of intellectual cultivation and taste to the character and prosperity of this nation. It has become a proverb, that popular institutions can rest securely only on the intelligence and virtue of the people, and that to these universal education is essential. But proverbs are words; and it is wonderful how superficially, after all, the great truth herein expressed has taken hold of the actual convictions of the people, or, at any rate, how

exceedingly low is the estimate of the requisite intelligence and virtue. Our governments and our politicians seem as yet to have hardly caught a glimpse of the truth, or to have suspected the responsibility which it devolves on them. They go forward as if the great duty of public men were still, as in the barbarous ages, to provide for external defence, as if the depredations of robbers were the only thing to be feared, and as if all wealth were wasted which is diverted to any other object. And, therefore, when they hold in their hands the public wealth beyond what this object requires, they know not what to do with it. Short-sighted beyond other men, they do not perceive that Providence has given them this unheard-of boon, just at the present age of the world, and in this precise state of society, that they might perform a duty for their country, which no other country ever had such an opportunity or such a need of performing, namely, the establishing that universal, thorough EDUCATION which all the wise and good see to be the one thing essential to the national prosperity. One might suppose it to be the great charge of a government so situated, to secure that one essential thing on which the hope of the nation rests. And yet, instead of thus acting up to the spirit of the age, they limit themselves by the narrow views of former and ignorant ages, and dissipate for temporary objects those means which might have been made to rear institutions that would bless the country to the end of time. Perhaps nothing different could be reasonably expected of the government of the nation; but we blush that Massachusetts should have proved so false to her former reputation as to throw away the splendid opportunity. We are ashamed that the magnificent sum of nearly two million dollars should be divided and subdivided, and scattered over the surface of this state, like so much water spilt upon the ground, on

the poor pretence of lightening the burdens of the people Have the sons of the Puritans come to regard this petty relief as the *summum bonum?* Is this the legislation which they ask at the hands of their representatives? We are slow to believe it, though it has been asserted. Or if, for the present, they are willing, like improvident children, to take a temporary gratification in place of a solid and lasting good, the time must come when they will count themselves wronged by the parsimonious indulgence.

While these things are so, it is the more necessary that individuals should devote themselves to this all-important concern. What has been done amongst us hitherto has been done principally by private beneficence; and the signs of the times indicate that government is determined to throw the future yet more upon the munificence and forethought of private men. However this may be, it is clear that the further progress of education depends on the interest which shall be taken in it by the men who are coming forward to fill the future places in society. They must therefore be early aware of their responsibility. However absorbed in their own affairs, they must allow themselves leisure to devote a portion of their care and thought to this general good. Public spirit must be a pervading and universal virtue; not displaying itself merely in those works of general convenience, by which intercourse is promoted, trade facilitated, and our cities adorned;—in regard to these, neglect is little to be apprehended, because they lie in the very path of men, and are palpably instrumental in the growth of population, wealth, and luxury. The public spirit which the times demand must go deeper; it must act as if the minds and character of the people were the chief concern, and therefore be anxious to enlarge the means of education and virtue, watch over the schools, encourage the institutions

of philanthropy, and labor for whatever advances society by advancing the minds of its individual members. What might not be the progress and glory of this land, if our young men would devotedly address themselves to this great enterprise!

To all this there is yet a higher principle to be added. It is not for patriotism only that we speak; it is not merely the prosperity, order, and peace of the community, that we would promote; nor can it be hoped that the highest form of civilization will be attained, if man be regarded as the creature of society only. There are no principles adequate to this end but those of the Christian faith. All others stop short of the requisite thoroughness and consistency. The laws of the commercial world uphold honesty because it is the best policy, and connive at breaches of morality when they are good policy also. Politicians and governments make wealth and power the supreme good, and have little care whether individuals be ignorant or informed, virtuous or vicious, happy or miserable, so long as the state prospers. The law of honor establishes an external decorum of deportment, and obliges the base to appear like gentlemen; but it cares not for any thing deeper than the appearance; it leaves character unimproved, affixes no stigma to the grossest debauchery of life, permits the seducer to walk unmarked amongst men, and applauds him who lives with the cherished purpose of revenging with murder any insult to his own person. The mere pursuit of science or letters, refining and strengthening as it may the intellect, yet allows the corruption of the heart to remain, frowns ambiguously on the irregularities of life, and admits the profligacy of Byron and Voltaire to the same honors with the purity of Cowper and Milton. It is not here, then, that we must have our young men schooled. It is not a punctilious personal

honor, nor a mere devotion to country, nor a zeal for knowledge, that can satisfy. We must see them concerned for PRINCIPLE; — patriots and scholars, for the reason, not that it is public-spirited and good policy, but from a sense of moral obligation, because it is immoral to be otherwise. They must regard virtue as the chief concern, the interests of the religious nature the chief interests, and whatever is done for themselves and for society, must be done in obedience to the will of God, and with a view to the highest welfare of his moral children.

We have not room to press this great topic. We can only implore our young men to give it their faithful consideration. Let them ask themselves what there is worth living for except virtue, and how virtue can exist without principle, and what principle can be trusted excepting that of religion. Let them take counsel of their moral nature; let them listen to the spirit's voice within, which they cannot fail sometimes to hear, however overborne by the noise of the world and the tumult of earthly desires. Let them set their mark high, and press steadily forward to reach it. What other lesson are they to learn from the hallowed history of their own land? Who made New England what it is? What laid the foundations of strength, virtue, knowledge, which have been, and still are,—blessed be God!—our just boast? Men, with whom religious considerations were the first question; who did their duty to the state because it was their duty to God; who thought that no real good existed for the human family, but that which grew up from Christian faith, and a stern devotedness to conscience and truth. Herein we discern the spirit that makes a commonwealth, and it is the only spirit that can keep it. So far as New England has gone forward, it is in the power and by the guidance of this spirit; and if it has gone backward, — if, in the love of

liberty, in devotion to knowledge and human rights, in high moral independence, she has gone backward, — it is because she has been unfaithful to this spirit of the forefathers, and recreant to their example. If in any honorable thing the commonwealth has deteriorated, it is because it is less a Christian commonwealth, and because inferior views have turned aside the hearts of the rulers, and corrupted the tastes of the people.

It is a narrow and short-sighted policy which excludes private principle from public actions; — as if God were not the Sovereign of the nation as well as of the man; as if he were not Lord of society as well as Father of its individual members; as if the whole history of the world did not show how he has exacted heavy retribution from the nations whenever they allowed selfishness and luxury to usurp the place of integrity and virtue. One would suppose, from the manner in which some men talk, that the ballot-box and the press were infallible talismans, breathing into the people undying vigor and everlasting youth; forgetting that they are both of them but the tools of the people, and sure to become corrupt and corrupting the moment that public and private principle are held cheap. And so of all our political institutions. They are at the beck and will of individual men; and they are the readiest instruments of the nation's ruin, if those men are allowed to become unprincipled. They may be unprincipled in spite of constitutions, free elections, and newspapers; in spite of a general education which should confine itself to human learning and the mere art of getting along in the world. O that our brave and goodly armies of youth, just coming into life, eager, resolute, and with the destiny of forty millions in their hands, could be made to see this! that they could be roused to under-

stand, and to act on the understanding of this infallible truth! that they could see how there are other institutions, those of moral instruction and Christian faith, on which the happiness and weal of themselves and all they love depend, infinitely more than on what the politicians and schemers about them contrive and enact! Let them observe, that there is no ground to fear lest the exchange and the senate-house be deserted, but there is fear lest the house of God be forsaken, and the institutions of religion cast away; lest the generations, that are rapidly filling up our extensive borders, should spread their tents upon the hill-sides and in the valleys without the tabernacle of the Lord among the tribes; lest worldly-mindedness and earthliness should possess and deprave the inheritance of our posterity.

Let our YOUNG MEN come to the rescue, and resolve to prevent the evil before it is too late. Beautiful it is to observe how many of them are already on the alert, and doing with their might what the times and their religion demand. How much does the cause of temperance, of education, of philanthropy, in all its various branches, owe to their hearty aid and affectionate zeal! We look with admiration and devout gratitude on the examples we have seen of the cultivated and accomplished bringing the treasures of their intelligence, their refinement, and their wealth, and laying them at the feet of the altar, in the service of the poor and the church. We say to them, God speed! They are doing for themselves and for society a work that can never pass away, the most important work now to be done for mankind. If their spirit could pervade the land, if in all our cities and villages this youthful energy could be excited, and the united force of our ten thousand beating and growing hearts be directed to this object, what a revolution should we not

behold, and how like Paradise would be our land, before the current century shall close! We put it to the conscience of every young reader, whether he will not do his part. It may seem little he can do; but let him think it would be criminal in him to withhold this little; let him know that, if he do it in simplicity and faith, it will be far more than he imagines. There is no infallible sign that the world is to be despaired of, until individual men think there is nothing for them to do toward its salvation.

THE FAITH

ONCE

DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS

THE FAITH

ONCE

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As the apostle Jude has declared it to be a duty of Christians *to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*, it becomes us to understand what that faith is, and to consider whether we are doing our duty in this particular. To aid us in this is the design of the following pages.

By the faith once delivered to the saints, we understand the Christian religion — those truths which were taught by our blessed Savior for the instruction, the regeneration, and the salvation of man. If it be inquired what these truths are, we should say, they seem to be mainly and chiefly comprised in the following summary.

That there is One Infinite and Eternal Being, the Source of all existence, the Author of all blessing, the Ruler of all worlds, who exercises an unreserved and impartial sovereignty over all beings and events:

That this God is One only, without equal, rival, or partner:

That this Being, infinitely perfect in his moral attributes, maintains a moral government over his creatures, the end of

which is the promotion of the greatest virtue and the greatest happiness:

That man is the subject of this moral government, beneath which he is treated as a free moral agent, capable of choosing between right and wrong, and accountable for his choice:

That in this world he is placed in a state of trial and probation, for the purpose of forming and bringing out his character, in preparation for a final allotment of condition in conformity with his character:

That into this state of preparatory discipline he comes, not with a character already fixed, but with certain rational faculties and moral capacities, in themselves neither good nor evil; that he himself, on entering life, is neither virtuous nor vicious; neither holy nor sinful; neither an object of praise nor of blame; but possesses such powers as, when developed, will render him one or the other, according to the objects to which they become attached and the habits which they form.

These powers are reason and conscience — which approve and lead to goodness; and the passions and appetites which, being connected with sensual objects and present gratifications, incline to self-indulgence and sin.

That man's trial consists principally in the struggle for mastery between these two parts of his constitution, (in the language of Scripture, "the law in the members and the law in the mind — the flesh and the spirit,") and its object is to exalt and purify his spiritual nature, and deliver it from subjection to the sensual:

That in order to aid man in this great struggle — to which, from natural infirmities and strong temptations, he was so often found unequal — it pleased God to commission his Son, Jesus Christ, to communicate all the knowledge, en-

couragement, and aid, and to set before him all the powerful motives, which might be necessary to his success and happiness:

That in the truths and institutions of his gospel, he has made a provision of means, which it is for man himself to use, and which he is left at liberty to use or to refuse; so that none will be saved except through his own exertion, nor will fail except through his own fault:

That these means are, his own instructions, as recorded in the Scriptures, and as connected with a previous dispensation; the worship and ordinances of his institution; the spiritual influences granted in answer to prayer; his own life, death, and example, so fitted to affect and influence the heart and character; and the promises and threatenings of future retribution:

That the terms of acceptance to divine favor are, faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and an obedient life; that future happiness is suspended on these conditions; those who comply with them shall be abundantly rewarded of divine grace; those who hold out against them shall deservedly suffer from the divine displeasure in a future condemnation:

That, as man had no claim to this revelation and aid from God, it is to be accounted the free gift of his grace, and therefore those who are saved by the gospel, are saved, not because of their own independent and unassisted righteousness, but by the grace of God — a grace which makes merciful allowance for human weakness and imperfection, while it imparts all needed assistance toward accomplishing the great end of man's spiritual improvement and moral perfection.

This view of the system of the divine administration and purposes, as gathered from the Christian Scriptures, may be thus presented in a more naked and compact form:

That there is one God over all; that Jesus is the Son of God, the predicted Messiah; that man is placed here in a state of probation; that the gospel is the final dispensation of religion — originating in the compassion of God for his sinful offspring, and founded in the placability of his nature — having for its object to make men holy, that they may be happy — establishing, as the terms of pardon and acceptance, faith, repentance of sin, and obedience of life — using for its means the labors, instructions, and institutions of Jesus Christ — and asserting the sanctions of a future state of retribution.

In this brief summary we have, as we conceive, the substance of the faith once delivered to the saints. We do not profess to have put down all its minute lineaments, but those general and fundamental traits which constitute it what it is, and which cannot be removed or denied without affecting its essential character. It is obviously a plain, simple, intelligible statement, with nothing in it to perplex the understanding, to contradict the judgment of sound reason, or to oppose the kind affections which God has planted within us.

For this system we are to contend — not only because it was once delivered to the saints, and is Christ's saving truth, but because there have prevailed in its place other systems, in many respects different — systems obscure, complicated, mysterious, and less agreeable to the *simplicity which is in Christ*. In contradistinction to them, we have sometimes found occasion to denominate this the *rational* system — not as arrogating any claim to intellectual superiority in its supporters, for we do not suppose them to possess any; much less as being independent of revelation, or opposed to it, for it is expressly founded on revelation; but because all the doctrines which it contains are agreeable to right reason,

while the opposing systems are admitted, even by some of their advocates, to be partly made up of doctrines repugnant to human reason. We beg that this explanation may be candidly regarded, when, for the sake of convenience, we use the expression *rational system.*

The faith, which we thus suppose to constitute the essence of the Christian religion, has our deep reverence and strong attachment. We have gathered it from our knowledge of the Scriptures; we have found it corroborated by the testimony of nature; we have strengthened our conviction of its truth by reflection and experience; we have seen its power in the regulation of the affections and the life; we have tasted its comforts in trial; and we place our confidence in it to sustain us in death, as we have known it to sustain others, with its cheering assurance of divine mercy and the animation of heavenly hope. How can we fail, then, to feel it a duty to contend for it? We should esteem ourselves unworthy of its privileges and pleasures, if we were ashamed to confess and vindicate it. We should deserve to be forsaken of its peace, if we should pusillanimously forsake its defence. May God give us wisdom and zeal successfully to maintain the truth which we conscientiously hold!

It will be our present object to bring forward a few of those general considerations which have tended to confirm us in the persuasion, that the system above exhibited is indeed the faith once delivered to the saints. We cannot but think that there is force in them, and that they are calculated to recommend and establish its claims.

1. The plainness and intelligibleness of this system is favorable to its claims.

We hear a great deal in the New Testament about "the simplicity that is in Christ." We are told that the gospel was "revealed to babes," and "preached to the poor." The

language of our Lord is perspicuous, and his instruction concerning the doctrines and duties of his religion easily intelligible. He wrapped up nothing in mystery, except when speaking to the perverse Jews, who were waiting to entrap him. He told his disciples, that to them "it was given to KNOW *the mysteries* of the kingdom of heaven," though to the Jews it was not given. His apostles also, although, on account of the controversies of the times, they delivered many things hard to be understood, yet in stating the great essential truths and requisitions of the gospel, were always clear and intelligible.

It is evident, then, that of two or more systems of faith claiming to be the original faith of the gospel, there is a presumption in favor of the more simple. And this the rather, because there has always been an acknowledged tendency to depart from the simplicity of the gospel. The history of Christianity in every age shows, that this tendency has been a chief source of religious corruption. Men have been fond of making their religion more imposing than they found it. In the very first age of the gospel, it was esteemed an objection to it with some, that it had no pomp and magnificence, nor hidden and awful mysteries, like the mythological faith of the ancient religions; it was an objection with others, that it was not subtile and profound, like the philosophy to which they had been accustomed in the schools of the sophists. Hence sprung the two sorts of corruptions, which flowed in like a deluge upon the church. On the one hand, they thought to dignify it, and remove what they esteemed its foolishness, by mixing with it their own wise speculations and philosophical subtilties; and on the other hand, they thought to relieve its nakedness by adorning its spiritual worship with the rites, and forms, and incense, and lustration, and images of their former idolatrous temples. I

need not say how much and how long the church suffered from these abuses. The rational system throws them off, wholly, in principle as well as in form. It tolerates nothing but what is simple. It makes essential nothing but what is plain. These were striking characteristics of the original faith; and they afford a strong presumption in favor of its identity with this.

2. It is a presumption in favor of the claims of the rational system, that it is constituted of articles in which all believers of every name are agreed; it occupies the common ground of Christians.

It will be found, if we mistake not, that the articles we have described are included in the faith of all believers. Others dissent from them rather by certain modifications and additions, than by absolute denial and contradiction. For example — in respect to the great doctrine of the Divine Unity; no Christians deny this doctrine. It is held by all. But some hold it with the *modification* that this One Being is constituted of three persons. So, also, that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God," none deny; but in some systems it is asserted that he is God himself, as well as the Son of God. So, also, that man is here placed in a state of probation, is universally allowed; but some receive it in connection with certain additional doctrines, which greatly affect and modify it. They suppose that he comes into life with a character already fixed — so strongly fixed, that it can be changed only by the power which made him at first; a notion which greatly affects, if it do not destroy, the probationary purpose of life. They suppose also that this final condition of happiness or misery has been already determined by the immutable decrees of God; which seems to leave life without any object, or at any rate makes it difficult to understand how it can be a state of probation.

That the object of the Christian dispensation is "to make men holy that they may be happy," none deny; it is a proposition to which unanimous assent would be given. But in some systems much is added, of very questionable authority, respecting the mode in which this holiness is attained, and the persons who may attain it. As, for example, some insist that it is a divine communication to the soul, an act of sovereign, almighty power, as great and supernatural as the original creation of the soul; and that none are the subjects of it but those who were appointed to it from eternity, by an irreversible decree of election. They thus, in effect, modify the simple doctrine so as to make the gospel only a mode of insuring the happiness and holiness of a specified portion of mankind.

Again. That the gospel is founded in "the placability of God," none would deny, but all would heartily declare. But in some systems there are found restrictions to the exercise of this placability, which appear essentially to alter its character. It is said, for instance, that God is not able to extend this attribute to sinful man, until a substitute have endured the penalty of his sins. This notion has assumed various forms, and a great deal of metaphysical acuteness has been exercised in making definitions and establishing distinctions. In every form, however, it seems to be taught, that the placableness of God, or his exercise of mercy in the gospel, depends on his having first received from the Savior an equivalent to satisfy the demands of justice in regard to the sinner's punishment. Now, it appears to us, that a placability thus encumbered and modified loses its claim to be so called. In the rational system we admit, because it is revealed, the connection of the Savior's sufferings and death with the extension of pardon and salvation to unworthy man; but we do not pretend to explain or understand fully that

connection. We think it enough to rejoice in the fact, that the divine mercy is thus exercised, without explaining the secrets of the divine administration, or presuming to say that God cannot, or can, pardon in this or that way.

Similar remarks might be made upon other points; but what we have said may be sufficient for our purpose. Now, we acknowledge it to be very natural that men should add to the naked statement of religious doctrines their own conceptions of their import, and mould them to their own feelings and opinions. Men love to explain, and illustrate, and exercise their ingenuity in searching into what is obscure, and discovering what is concealed, and building great systems from small hints. But, in doing this, it is plain that the original groundwork would be retained, and would be held in common by all, however different the additions they might make to it. And there is certainly a presumption that this common groundwork, these universal principles, which none have been able to remove or hide, do of themselves constitute the genuine, original system.

3. It is another strong presumption in favor of the rational system, that it is most agreeable to the obvious meaning and general tenor of the New Testament; that is to say, it contains those views of religion, which a plain, serious man, unbiased by education, and unprejudiced by his connections in the world, would naturally derive from his first careful study of the Scriptures. He would state these to be his impressions respecting its contents: That there is but one God; that he requires men to do his will; that he has compassion on human imperfection; that Jesus Christ is his Son; that by him he has given and promised all needful aid for man's instruction and salvation; that all, who will, may come to God through him, and that none who come shall be rejected; and that the future condition of

all will be determined by an equitable judgment according to character. There is no doubt that a man of plain, unbiased mind would discern this to be the substance of the faith contained in the New Testament, and that, if he had never heard of it before, it would not occur to him that there are three persons in the one God, or that God has chosen a select few from all eternity, and left the rest of mankind without help, or that all are so corrupt on account of Adam's transgression that they can do nothing but sin. The general aspect and complexion of the holy volume would not suggest to him these doctrines. He would find some passages hard to be understood, and some expressions obscure. But he would not think of collecting the meaning of the book from these. He would not judge of any other book by the passages which he could not understand; — neither will he of this. And whatever some men might learn by refined criticism and ingenious speculation on dark and hidden expressions, *he* would not doubt that he was right in taking for his guide the plain passages and most definite expressions. Now, it is very remarkable that the rational system is contained, in most explicit terms, in those portions of Scripture which are plainest, easiest, and most indisputable; while the more complicated systems are gathered, by arguments and inferences, from those portions which are ambiguous and difficult, and which have perplexed thinking men in all ages to interpret them. Can there be a doubt, then, which is likely to be the true system?

4. It is another presumption in its favor, that the most important corruptions which have crept into the records of our faith have been of a character to favor an opposing system, and that the more the Scriptures are restored to the precise words of their writers, the greater is the support which they give to the rational system.

Upon this point a very brief statement will be sufficient. It is familiarly known that a few verses of the New Testament have been altered since it was written, and do not read in our copies of the Bible exactly as the apostles wrote them. A great deal of pains has been taken to ascertain their original reading, and it has been found that some of the principal alterations were made for the purpose of supporting the Orthodox faith; that, as the apostles wrote them, they were inconsistent with that faith, and altogether conformable to the rational system. What could be more in favor of that system? The nearer we come to the very words of the sacred writers, the more nearly do they coincide with it. We do not mean that there are many such cases; but what there are, are remarkably to this purpose. And if we choose to take the Scriptures as nearly as possible, word for word and letter for letter, as they came from their holy authors, and to reject whatever changes may have been made in them either accidentally or purposely, then we shall find that the examples I have mentioned indicate the faith once delivered to the saints to be the faith which we hold.

5. The manner in which this system is for the most part opposed, seems to us to afford another presumption in its favor. It has been by exciting prejudice against it, and preventing free and fair inquiry concerning it.

We, of course, shall not be understood to say that this is the only mode of opposition which has been resorted to; for there has been a great deal of profound learning and manly argument arrayed against it. But the favorite and prevailing method has been to raise an outcry against it, and hinder men from fairly examining it. Hence it has been urgently recommended in religious publications, as well as from the pulpit and in conversation, that men should avoid

the worship of liberal Christians; that they should shun their books as they would poison; that they should not listen to their preaching, or hold any religious intercourse with them. Thus their system is made an object of dread and aversion. But if it were plainly false and erroneous, without foundation in Scripture or fair reasoning, there would be no cause for thus blinding men to it, and preventing their inquiring into its pretensions. This alarm lest men should know any thing about it, this eagerness to keep them in ignorance concerning it, and to fill their minds with an unenlightened and superstitious horror of it, seems to indicate an apprehension that its claims are too powerful to be resisted when understood, and that the only sure way to keep men from becoming converts to it, is to keep them in ignorance of it.

I do not say this tauntingly. I would not use a taunt upon such a subject. I only state what is forced upon my thought by unquestionable facts. There are many examples of men who have dared — in spite of precaution, obloquy, and discouragement — to read, and hear, and think for themselves; and who, by so doing, have come to discard their prejudices, and throw away their superfluous articles, and rest satisfied and happy in the simple doctrines of the rational system. In doing this they have made great sacrifices, which attested their sincerity and conscientiousness; they have given up friendships, and reputation, and livelihood, and whatever earthly good is dearest, that they might secure the truth of God and peace to their own souls. It is such instances, proving how dangerous is free inquiry, which have led its opposers to discourage all acquaintance with it, and to secure by prejudice what they dared not trust to argument.

We are aware that any inferences drawn from con-

versions of this sort are in general to be little depended upon, for probably every sect can produce examples of them. Still we cannot but think that the instances to which we allude, in the preceding paragraph, were attended by circumstances which demand for them, to say the least, a candid consideration. For they are examples of men, not of worldly lives and no religious pretensions, who had adopted their system without knowing any thing of its grounds of support, and then left it, at last, in a period of strong religious excitement, when they became convinced, for the first time, of the importance of personal religion. But these, to whom we refer, were men of long-established religious principle, of extensive acquaintance with Scripture truth, of devout habits, and some of them valued and eminent ministers of the gospel. Yet such men — while still influenced by their long habitual fear of God and attachment to his word — have given up their accustomed faith, and, like the apostle Paul, have "preached the faith which they once destroyed." When our minds rest on such examples as these, we cannot help deriving from them a feeling, not to say an argument, in favor of our views of truth. It is but a small thing that a man should abandon a system of which he knows but little, and for which he cares not seriously, and with which, especially, he has none of the holy and dear associations of personal and experimental religion. But that serious and devout men should leave that faith which they had studied and loved long, and with which all their deepest sentiments of devotion and hope had always been connected, — this is a thing to be accounted for. And can we in any way so reasonably account for it as by believing that what produces this great effect is indeed the truth of God — which is mighty, and will prevail?

6. A further presumption that this is the faith once delivered to the saints, may be found in the fact, that it is in truth the system adopted by a great portion of those who are educated in another faith, and who have always had another system preached to them. Inquire of them, in friendly and confidential conversation, the particulars of their faith, — let them talk freely, and throw off the disguise of technical phraseology, and declare in their own language what they believe, — and you find that they have no idea of any different religious principles from those which we have advanced. After all the pains taken to indoctrinate them, they stand fast by the plain, primary principles of gospel truth. Ascertain carefully their opinion respecting the nature of God, and you find that, when they get beyond the *words*, they have no more notion of three *persons* in the Deity than you have yourself. Describe to them the doctrines of total depravity, election, reprobation, and the kindred tenets, as they are set forth in the confessions and bodies of divinity, and they count it slander to attribute to them such a faith; they hold it unfair and ungenerous to charge them with maintaining such dogmas. This is a matter of familiar observation. We constantly meet with men who have supposed themselves Orthodox, as it is called, but who find, on a careful examination of the Christian doctrines, that they are not so. They have held the name and the phraseology, but never embraced the system in its detail, as laid down in the books. Their actual faith has been that of the rational system. Does not this afford a presumption in favor of the truth of that system? since even the powerful influence of education, and the weekly expositions of the pulpit, have been unable to displace its simple, reasonable, and comforting truths. What divine

power must it not possess, thus to vindicate to itself the assent of multitudes, who have been all their lives instructed in opposition to it!

7. We also find a presumption in favor of this system in the fact, that these are the views of Christian truth into which men have been prone to settle down wherever inquiry has been left perfectly free, and no persecution or loss could attend their profession. It has been found in many examples, that when society has been at peace, and the churches have rested without disturbance or fear for any considerable period, there has been a natural and inevitable progress toward this system. So it was at Geneva, once the stronghold of Calvin himself. Being left to pursue the light of truth wherever in God's providence it might lead them, without dread of consequences, the believers of that city gradually softened down the tone of their doctrines, and became the mild and happy professors of the simpler system. So it was in the school of divinity instructed by Doddridge. Beneath that devout and charitable teacher, the young men read and reflected, without fear of reproach or excommunication, and the minds of many of them were opened to the errors of Orthodoxy, and they became advocates of the liberal faith.

And how was it that the liberal system gained so extensive prevalence in Boston and its vicinity? It was by the operation of the same irresistible causes. The churches were for a long period at peace, having none to molest them or make them afraid. They worshiped God quietly, and walked together in charity, provoking one another — not to strife and questions — but to love and good works. Truth has best scope in still waters, and makes most rapid advance where there is no prejudice. And so it came to pass, that the Calvinistic notions, which had long been clinging to the

Christian system, gradually fell from it, and in the natural progress of things the rational faith prevailed. It was as if a man should sow seed in his field, and sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how — first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. So it would have continued to spread; and its friends would have rejoiced to see the glorious work of the church's regeneration still carried forward by the silent operation of that Providence which does all things thus. But opposition to its progress was awakened, and the whole enginery of creeds, and combinations, and loud outcry, were arrayed against it, and the calm elements, which had favored its growth, were thrown into stormy convulsions.

The friends of Orthodoxy are so fully aware of this natural tendency of free and unembarrassed inquiry, that they think it necessary to counteract it by strong restrictions. To mention one example — they lay the professors of their seminaries under obligations not to believe, or teach, and sometimes not even to "insinuate," any thing inconsistent with certain prescribed articles. And lest, notwithstanding this, a teacher should by any means change an opinion, he is sometimes compelled to renew the obligation every five years! The rational system needs no guards and fetters like this. THE TRUTH does not require to be thus bound.

Other examples like these might be cited. And how can we doubt as to the inference to be drawn? How can we doubt which is most nearly the genuine system, when the one flourishes by violent measures, and is nursed and protected by creeds, and threats, and prejudice — and the other never grows so rapidly and soundly as when the passions are at peace, prejudice and suspicion at rest, and the minds

of men left to study God's word and commune with him, free from all control and apprehension of human judgment?

8. The moral and practical character of this system seems to us another circumstance in favor of its claims. It does not profess to go profoundly into philosophical speculations, or to be very anxiously engaged in unravelling and explaining the secrets of the divine will, and the purposes of the divine decrees. It finds no virtue in schemes of ingenious workmanship, which may have the praise of human logic. It is content with those few, simple principles which God has been pleased plainly to reveal, and which have a direct bearing on the momentous concerns of human duty. It is satisfied to know what God requires of us, without making it essential that we should understand all the designs of the divine administration. In regard to them many things are secret and unfathomable. But duty is revealed and unquestionable. Duty therefore makes the chief thing in the rational system. To do God's will is thought to be the great and prime consideration. When men have done this from the right motives, it teaches that they are safe; for there can be no doubt that God will do what he has purposed and promised, whether we understand rightly or not the method and the means.

When we see a system thus exclusively practical, laying its chief stress on obedience to God and conformity to his laws, we cannot hesitate to regard it as the genuine faith. For we see that it tends directly, without circumlocution or delay, to effect that great purpose of man's moral regeneration which it was the object of the gospel to accomplish. It places nothing before that. It makes every thing inferior to it. It allows of no substitute for it.

And while we regard it as thus favorable to virtue, we

cannot pass without special mention of the graces of charity and candor, to which it is peculiarly favorable, and which, in a manner, may be considered as its own. I know that we have been accused of boasting on this subject, and that we expose ourselves to certain sneers and ridicule if we mention it. But we can repeat, without boasting, that we still believe it to be true. God knows, that, in practice, we are but too deficient in a grace which we so much honor; and that we often exhibit examples of illiberality and uncharitableness wholly at war with our profession. Would that we might be more consistent! But inconsistency with an opinion is no proof that the opinion is false. And, be it remembered, it never has been asserted that all rational Christians are charitable, but that the rational system is peculiarly favorable to charity. The reason is this — that, being confined to a few plain articles of essential truth, it is able to allow and feel that on other articles men may differ and err, and yet be acceptable and saved. But those who add largely to their list of articles, and hold them all to be essential, of necessity maintain that men cannot innocently differ, and that therefore there is no salvation for those who dissent. Hence the Papal church is exclusive. The Orthodox church is exclusive. They must be so. Their systems require it. The rational system requires the contrary. And if the Christian religion make charity the chief grace, which system must be nearest that delivered to the saints — that which makes it impossible to judge charitably of those who err, or that which requires it?

9. It is still another circumstance favorable to the claims of this system, that even unbelievers and men of the world are compelled to look upon it with approbation and respect. It never has been a popular system, because it is too plain and unimposing. But then it is well known that men of

inquiring and reflecting minds, who have disbelieved Christianity under some of its forms, have become converts to it under this form; and that even irreligious and worldly men do not withhold from it the expressions of their respect.

This has been accounted for by saying that it is near akin to infidelity and worldly-mindedness. But candid reflection might suggest a truer cause; it might discern in this a proof of the strong marks which the system bears of divine original and truth — so strong, that they who have resisted the evidence for Christianity in any other form have been compelled to assent to it in this; so evidently, conspicuously, and incontrovertibly worthy of God and suitable to man, so undeniably consonant to all the desires and wants of human nature, that skepticism itself cannot doubt, and the veriest worldly-mindedness is compelled to acknowledge and adore. If they do not give it all their hearts; if they will not make sacrifices for its sake; if they will not conform to it, as they ought, in a new life and holier conversation, — yet they cannot deny it the homage of their respect, and dare not pour upon it reviling and contempt. We confess that, however others may feel, we cannot help regarding this circumstance, for our part, as a presumption in favor of its claims; for it coerces, as we may say, the regard of men, who — with this exception — have been disinclined to believe or to honor the religion of Jesus. It verifies the words of Solomon — "The evil bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous." It reminds us of the days of our Savior, when it was a signal attestation to his divine authority and power, that even the demons, when they saw him, were made to cry out and acknowledge him.

Being thus persuaded of the divine authority of the faith which we hold, we esteem it our duty to contend for it. We must not suffer our religion to be a matter of indifference to us, but of hearty interest. We must feel it to be important and precious — not merely a good sort of thing, which it is well enough to have, but which also we can do well enough without; but the best of all things, which we can by no means do without; which is dear to us as any of our possessions, and which we are ready to defend and advocate, as we would our property, liberty, and life, against any who should assail them.

And truly, if it have enlightened our minds; if it have given us trust in God and access to his favor; if it have filled us with the sublime and comforting hope of a happy immortality, and raised us above the dread of death, — we should be unfeeling and ungrateful if we did not desire to impart the same to others, if we did not long to pour into their wounds the balm which has healed our own hearts, and provide for them a shelter beneath the everlasting rock which is a covert for ourselves. And if there were any who could hold this in derision, and pour contempt upon it, and defame it in the ears of the world, and drive away those who were coming to it for salvation, we should then be bound — by all our knowledge of its worth, by all our experience of its peace, by all our acquaintance with its sanctifying and consoling influence — we should be bound to stand forth in its defence as if our mother were reviled, and "contend earnestly" for the jewel of our souls.

Of the various modes in which this duty may be performed, it is not our design to speak. He who is rightly interested in his religion will readily discern by what means he may promote it, and will not fail to use his opportunities of so doing. He will count it no hardship, but a pleasure, to

aid the cause of religious education, to be a patron of religious publications, and to cast in his mite for the encouragement of benevolent associations, and, above all, to evince his sense of the worth and excellence of his faith, by its influence over his own life and conversation. We cannot too earnestly insist upon this. Men will judge a doctrine by its fruits. If these be good, not all the malice of its enemies will convince men that the tree is bad. If these be evil, not all the eloquence of its friends will persuade them that the tree is good. The first and most desirable of all things is *personal religion.* None will believe that we contend for the faith from any good motive, except its light shine in us, and they see our good works. What can it be supposed that we care for the faith, if we are not ourselves subject to its power? What is the worth of speculative truth held in unrighteousness? What would the world be the better for a correct system of doctrines, if it were consistent with irreligious and immoral practice?

Remember, then, that *the Faith once delivered to the Saints* is — not a barren catalogue of doctrinal truths — but the CHRISTIAN RELIGION — a religion, in its essence and power embraced, we devoutly trust, by all classes of disciples, and dear to every spirit that cares for immortality — a religion which cannot be monopolized by any one sect, and a true regard for which is to be shown by diligent study to know what it is, and faithful practice to become what it requires.

It is the truth of God, revealed from heaven; of infinite moment to man, because it points out the way of duty and the method of salvation. It is the message of pardon and reconciliation by Jesus Christ; of infinite value to the soul burdened with sin, because it teaches where there is cleansing and acceptance, and how the penitent may be restored to

God. It is the promise of eternal life through the divine mercy; of infinite value to the soul that stands trembling on the verge of life, because it lights up the dying eye with the vision of a future world, and soothes the sinking heart with the prospect of eternal rest.

Who, then, would be ignorant or unconcerned respecting the faith of Christ? Who would not embrace it heartily, live by it scrupulously, and contend for it earnestly?

THREE

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

ANSWERED,

RELATING TO THE

CHRISTIAN NAME, CHARACTER, AND HOPES.

THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

ANSWERED.

It is my object, in these pages, to consider and attempt to answer the three following questions: —

I. What is it to be a Christian?

II. How does a man become a Christian?

III. How shall a man satisfy himself that he is a Christian?

They are important questions, of very deep and serious personal interest. They deserve a careful consideration and solemn reply.

I. What is it to be a Christian?

The word *Christian* is used in a particular and in a general sense. In a general sense, when we call those *Christians*, who dwell in a Christian community, and partake of the privileges of the gospel. Every such man is so named in distinction from a *pagan*, or one who lives in a pagan country. It is in this sense that we say any one is a Christian by birth.

Every man, also, who believes the Scriptures, is a Christian, in opposition to a deist or infidel, who does not believe the Scriptures.

It is not concerning a Christian in either of these senses that we are to inquire; but concerning him who is to be acknowledged as such, on account of the full influence of

the gospel upon his own heart and character, and who, upon his own responsibility, independent of all other beings, is to receive a Christian's favor and happiness in the future world.

It is in this sense that the inquiry is so important to us. We are all of us Christians, if that mean, not to be heathen. We are all of us Christians, I trust, in the sense of not being infidels. But it is still a question whether we are Christians in the special, saving sense of the word, so that we can appropriate to ourselves the promises of the gospel, and lay claim to its hope and peace. If not, we might as well be pagans or infidels. It can avail us nothing to have the name, if we want the reality.

I say, then, first of all, to be a Christian is precisely the same thing as to be a *disciple of Jesus Christ.*

A *disciple* — to speak in general terms — is one who acknowledges any one as his teacher, and faithfully follows his instructions. Thus, for example, those who chose Socrates or Plato for their teacher, and lived according to their directions, imbibing, owning, and practising their system of philosophy, were called their *disciples.* Those who in like manner acknowledge and follow Mahomet as the prophet of God, are called his *disciples.* So the Jews were disciples of Moses; as some of them said to the man whom Jesus had healed, *Thou art his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples.* And to the same purpose we read, *the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ, two things are necessary — to receive him as an Instructor, and to obey him as a Master.

1. To receive Christ as an instructor, to regard him as the teacher of our souls, at whose feet we are ready to sit as humble, docile pupils, and receive without question what-

ever he may communicate respecting God, and his character and purposes. He that is thus eager and willing to learn of Jesus as God's appointed Teacher, or, which is the same thing, to take his religion from the New Testament, is so far a Christian. And he has a perfect claim to the title, when,

2. He carries into practical effect those instructions, and faithfully conforms himself to them in heart, disposition, and conduct. This faith in him as a divine Teacher, and obedience to him as a Savior, constitute a Christian.

Some, however, will step in here, and tell us that this is not sufficient. They will name a certain list of doctrines, which it is necessary to believe that Jesus taught, and declare that no one is a Christian who does not hold a certain specified form and number of religious articles. Of such I ask, Who told you so? Who has given you a right to say, that there is only one sect in all Christendom which contains true disciples? — for in fact the assertion amounts to this. Just as if it were not more well pleasing to our Lord, that one should come to him and learn of him with right dispositions and faithful endeavors, than that he should simply attain a correct set of abstract opinions. There is not a passage in the New Testament which requires a completely unerring faith, before one can be numbered with the disciples of Christ. I can point to a multitude of passages which require a *life* without error; but I do not remember one which requires a *faith* without error. On the contrary, I recollect that we are told "to receive the *weak* in faith;" and, what is more, to receive them without "doubtful disputations."* I recollect, too, that, while the twelve were always acknowledged by their living Master as his disciples, they had many great errors of faith, even in respect to the

* Romans xiv. 1.

nature of his kingdom. But when they were humble, sincere, diligent learners, — they listened to him, and followed him, and placed all their confidence in him; and therefore, notwithstanding their errors, they were received by him. It is plain, therefore, that no man is to be refused the name of Christian solely on account of the supposed imperfection of his faith. They that have drawn up their articles, and declare that all who do not conform to them are not Christians, are trying men by a wrong standard, — a standard which their Master himself, by his conduct to his disciples, has discountenanced.

This point may be made perfectly clear at once, by appealing to every man's experience and plain common sense. You meet with a man, who, in all the relations of life in which he moves, is marked for his uprightness and integrity, his good dispositions, and general benevolence. He says very little, perhaps seldom says any thing, about his religion, but withal is humble and distrustful of himself, mild and meek in his intercourse with men, punctual in his attendance on the worship and ordinances of God, and apparently diligent in the perusal of the Scriptures, which he seems to reverence, and love, and live by. What do you say of this man? Do you not consider him a Christian? You have never heard him converse for half an hour on religious subjects; you do not know any thing of his opinions on any one of the great doctrines which have divided the church; but you do not doubt that he is a Christian. Perhaps, well as you know him, you do not even know in what temple he worships, or with what church he communes; you have not thought to ask whether he be Methodist, or Quaker, or Episcopalian, or Baptist. But you do not doubt that he is a Christian. The evidence is stamped on every feature of his life; and you would as soon think of waiting for the

anatomist to examine his body, before you would venture to call him a man, as you would wait to know his private opinions on controverted points, before you admit him to be a Christian. In such a case as this there is no dispute. All agree. All acknowledge Fenelon, and Lardner, and Doddridge, and Penn, and Wesley, to be Christians; and yet, on disputed topics, in which some tell you is the standard, they differed from each other as the four winds of heaven.

You meet with another man who presents a different aspect. He talks very often and very long about his religion; it is the favorite topic of his conversation, on which he dwells with earnestness and zeal, and condemns all who seem to be less zealous than himself. He lays urgent stress upon the peculiar doctrines which he has adopted; he proclaims their excellence, he argues for their truth, he is almost ready to suffer martyrdom in their defence; and they are the very doctrines which are declared to be *the essentials* to the Christian. But, then, at the same time, you discover that there is something in him of religious ostentation and spiritual pride; he does not govern his passions; he indulges his appetites, is selfish, and exerts himself but little for the benefit of others; and is quite censorious and uncharitable in his judgments. Now, what do you say of such a man? Do you think that his merely holding that set of opinions, which is said to constitute a Christian, gives him a fair title to the Christian name? Do you not at once judge that his feelings, dispositions, and character, are more than an offset to these opinions? Does not every one judge so?

I have stated these two cases strongly, because it is easiest thus to put the principle to the test. Upon such cases — and they are by no means imaginary — there can be no difference of opinion; and they prove that it is perfectly absurd to pre-

tend that any certain set of opinions, beyond an acknowledgment of the divine authority of Jesus Christ and his gospel, is essential to a Christian, or constitutes a Christian.

They prove to us, further, that he is a genuine disciple, who, having patiently and humbly learned of Jesus whatever he teaches, and cast himself on his gospel for salvation, faithfully cultivates *his* spirit, and forms his character according to that teaching and his example.

This is a definition which cannot be set aside. This will hold good amidst all the opposition of zeal and bigotry. This, in all practical decisions, ever has been, and ever must be, appealed to, by the sober common sense and unanimous judgment of the whole Christian world.

He may be more or less enlightened. He may be more or less an adept in subtilties of doctrine and mysteries of knowledge. He may see reason to hold the five points of one, or stronger reason to abide by the five hundred of another. But if he have, with a good and honest heart, gone to the word of Jesus himself, and imbibed his spirit, and brought forth the fruits of that spirit, — *heretic* he may be, but he is still a Christian; and from the living grave of the Inquisition, or the flaming pile of Protestant persecution, his meek and lowly spirit shall ascend to a righteous Judge, and be acknowledged in the presence of angels. Many, many will appear on the right hand, at the last day, whom human judgment would not suffer to live, because they were no Christians!

How important, then, is it for us to avoid the error of making our private opinions the standard by which to judge the claims of our fellow-men! It is not the right standard by which to try *ourselves;* much less by which to try others. We cannot go beyond their general characters; and if their characters, under a charitable construction, are agreeable to

the upright and devout spirit of the gospel, it is to the last degree arrogant and criminal in us to deny them the Christian name. We may think their opinions erroneous, and say so, if we please; but to denounce them as not Christians, because it is *our opinion* that *their opinions* are erroneous, — words cannot express the absurdity.

That we may the more fully understand the Christian character, let us go for a moment into detail, and notice some of the particulars of which it is composed.

1. First, then, the Christian is one who feels a deep and solemn interest in religion, as a thing of the first importance to his happiness, and which is valuable to him above every thing else. This religious concern lies, as it were, at the bottom of his character. It is not a feeling which excludes all interest in the world and the pursuits of life; for he attends to the cares of his present calling as faithfully as any man. But he does not think them, as others do, the only things worth attending to; he thinks religion more important, and mixes it with all other things. It has the first and ruling place among his desires.

2. The next thing is his devotedness to the Holy Scriptures. He humbly and thankfully betakes himself to them, as containing a complete and merciful revelation from God of all that pertains to duty, happiness, and eternity. Conscious of his own insufficiency, he casts himself upon the Scriptures in all his anxieties about religion and his soul, acknowledging no other rule for his faith, and no other guide to his conduct.

3. Another thing which distinguishes him is his piety. Love to God is with him the first and great commandment, to which all the other affections submit, and from which all other duties flow. This regard to the Supreme Being,

exhibited in love, trust, holy fear, and habitual obedience, is an essential trait in the Christian's character.

4. His regard to his Savior is another trait. He thinks often of his holy Master, delighting to remember him and to dwell upon his pure and beautiful character, and his wonderful love to man.

5. He is distinguished by his dispositions towards his fellow-men. His Master has taught him to feel toward them and treat them as brethren. He therefore does unto them as he would have them do unto him. He is kind, mild, patient, and forgiving, not easily provoked, not proud, not censorious, not oppressive. One of the great peculiarities of the gospel lies in the meek and quiet spirit which it inculcates and forms; in the graces of humility, purity, patience, meekness, forbearance, forgiveness, benevolence. It was these which gave such singular eminence to the character of Jesus Christ, and made it so lovely. It was these which he required with particular earnestness in his disciples. It is these which the apostle Paul enumerates with a special distinctness as the *fruits of the Spirit;* "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance." It was these which our Lord singled out for a pointed benediction when he began his ministry, proclaiming, Blessed are the meek, the humble, the pure, the peaceable, the mourning, the persecuted. Dr. Buchanan tells us, that, when he visited the Syrian churches, he found that eminent Christians were distinguished among them as *Men of the Beatitudes* — a beautiful and expressive title! A Christian, then, is A MAN OF THE BEATITUDES. He walks in the gentleness of his Lord's example, in the benignity of his Master's spirit. Neither the fashions of the world, nor the opinions of men, nor the principles of society, nor the solicitations nor example of those around him, can move

him from a determined adherence to these maxims of his Lord. For he is aware, that just so far as he departs from them, he is unworthy the name of his disciple.

6. That he may keep alive in his heart this distrust of himself, this sense of his unworthiness and humility of soul, this reverence for the Scriptures, this devotedness to God, and these holy and benevolent dispositions, he is faithful in waiting on all the appointed means of grace and improvement. He slights not God's worship, neglects not his ordinances, and fails not to be constant and persevering in the private exercises of faith and piety. He does not regard them as the end and summit of all attainment, nor think them worthy of boasting; but they are necessary, he feels, to his life and growth in religion, and they afford his highest satisfactions.

These are some of the main particulars in which the disciple of Christ is distinguished; and we thus learn what it is to be a Christian.

I now come to the next inquiry.

II. How does a man become a Christian?

We shall arrive most satisfactorily at the answer to this inquiry, if we will go back to the infancy of his being, and trace him onward to his full stature in Christian perfection.

When a human being is born into the world, it is an object of its Maker's complacency and love. Its soul is as yet unstained. It has done neither good nor evil. I do not say that it is an object of moral *approbation;* because one receives approbation only for what he has himself done. But if it have done no act of holy obedience, to call for approbation, neither has it been guilty of sinful disobedience, to

merit censure. It is just such as it was fashioned by God — innocent, lovely; therefore an object of God's complacent, kind regard. And if during infancy it be removed from earth, its unblemished spirit flies upward, and is welcomed with a smile to the bosom of its Father's eternal love.

It was in the spirit of such reflections as these, that the Son of God, when he had taken little children in his arms and blessed them, declared that of *such is the kingdom of heaven*. He has thus encouraged us to look upon them as partakers of divine favor, and has authorized us to believe and say, that every infant immortal, when first consigned to this state of discipline and preparation, is a member of the kingdom of heaven. The smiles of early infancy are sweet in the eyes of heaven's King; the death of early infancy is but the fading of a beautiful flower, that is to bloom afresh in the garden of heaven's King; "their angels do always behold the face of their Father in heaven; and it is not his will that one of these little ones should perish."

But it is still very evident, that, spotless and lovely as the infant may be, it is yet no Christian. This implies, as we have seen, a knowledge of religion, and a practice of actual goodness, of which its helpless age is incapable. How, then, shall the infant become a Christian?

I answer, in the first place, by instruction and education. He is *now* of the kingdom of heaven; why should he ever leave it? As soon as his reason dawns, let him be taught the knowledge of God and his providence; as soon as his affections open, let them be fixed on the great and infinite source of excellence and happiness; let his earliest lessons be concerning the life and gospel of Jesus Christ, and his earliest steps be made to go in imitation of his example.

May not this be done successfully, so that he shall inevitably and incontrovertibly become a Christian? He never quits the kingdom of heaven, of which he was originally a member, but, as soon as his moral powers begin their exercise, as soon as his moral accountableness commences, he chooses God for his Sovereign, Christ for his Master and Lord, his gospel for his guide, his example for his pattern, his faith and hope for his support, his heaven for his home; he clings to them, lives by them, and, as he grows in stature, grows also in favor with God and man.

The world — blessed be God! — has seen many who thus have joined themselves to the fellowship of Jesus, without the misery and anguish of a late repentance; who have devoted themselves to God from the cradle, and have trodden in no other path than that of purity and truth, so exhibiting the temper of their Master, that all have taken notice of them that they have been with Jesus.

And certainly it is not strange that it should be so. It is the object of life to form man's character for eternity. For this purpose he is exposed in various ways, and to various trials. If some are overcome by these trials, it were to be expected that some also would not be overcome by them. When so many ways are open at the beginning of life, and so many choose evil ways, it is not strange that some should select the good way — that some should follow Christ, when so many follow the world. While such numbers lose the simplicity, openness, humility, and purity of their infant spirits, it cannot be thought surprising that some should retain them.

We do not mean by this that they are faultless, and never sin. By no means. Notwithstanding their good disposition, principles, and resolutions, they doubtless sin often and much. But so do all Christians. The oldest, firmest,

best, sin often and much. I have never heard of a Christian who was past sinning. The imperfection, therefore, of those who have become Christian by education, does not prove them to have no right to the name.

Many imagine it to be essential that a man be converted. But they seem not to consider the distinction between *conversion* and *repentance*. Every man must repent. But I do not see that it is possible for such a one as I have described to be converted, in the proper sense of that term. He, doubtless, has continual need of humility, and repentance for his remaining sinfulness; but so have those who have passed through the soundest and most satisfactory conversion. He may also, at some particular season, feel the sense of this peculiarly burdensome and oppressive, — as I doubt not every religious man has had such a season. But in him I have described, it cannot be considered as the period of conversion; for such periods of humiliation and concern occur to the most established Christians. They do not prove that *they* were no Christians before; neither do they prove that *he* was none; they are not accounted times of regeneration in *them;* neither should they be in *him*. To convert is to turn; to be converted is to be turned, — not partially, from one thing, opinion, or character, to its opposite, but completely. Now, from what would you turn him? The most remarkable thing about him is his uniform regard to God and the gospel. You would not turn him from that. *To* what would you turn him? To the faith of the gospel? to the love of God? to the imitation of Christ? to sobriety, purity, righteousness, true holiness, temperance, and charity? Why, these things he has kept from his youth up; they have been the objects of his solicitude, and pains, and prayers, ever since he knew that

he had a soul. You cannot turn him into what he is already; and how, then, can he be converted? *

* It may be thought that the verse Matt. xviii. 3 presents an objection to what is here offered — *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* But that it does not, is evident from the following considerations: —

1. This verse strikingly corroborates my main position, that all are to be regarded as at first members of the kingdom of heaven; for, in order that one who is not may become so, he must go back to his childlike character.

2. It is probable that our Lord's meaning in this passage is limited, and not universal. He is rebuking the ambitious temper of his disciples, who desire to know *who is greatest.* His reproof we may suppose confined to this temper — *except ye be turned from this disposition*, and become as little children; which is made still more evident from the next verse — "whosoever, therefore, shall *humble himself*, as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

3. If we suppose the expression applicable to all others in a general sense, we must observe that it only states what is necessary to those who are not already Christians; they must return to the character of childhood. But it leaves us at full liberty to understand, that those who have kept that character cannot be included, because they cannot go back.

4. If from this, or other passages, it be inferred that conversion was essential to all in the first age of the gospel, this will not prove that it is essential now; because it was the only possible mode of attaining the Christian character *then*, but *now* there is another; for the gospel now is offered to the youngest children.

5. The Christian character is a certain state of heart and life. The evidence of its existence, in any case, is to be found not in a certain process of formation, but in the actual state of the man. One may be a Christian, though utterly unable to describe the means by which he became so. And if he be already all that conversion is intended to make him, conversion is clearly unnecessary. The question is, *What is he?* not, *Through what scenes has he been passing?*

6. The only solid foundation for the doctrine which this text is

We may be satisfied, then, that some men become Christians by education. They never go out from the kingdom of God; but in spite of temptations, and frequent wanderings, and many stains of unworthiness, they are, at heart and in principle, God's servants and children. They grow up Christians.

But there is still a large class of men who have not thus attached themselves to religion, and who, if they ever become Christians, must become so in later life. Instead of taking the gospel for their guide, they have chosen some other leader; and under the control of appetite and passion, or worldly principle, they have left the kingdom of God, thrown off his allegiance, and followed the devices of their own hearts, without regard to his authority or revelation. There are many such in the world; and the question occurs, How shall they become Christians?

There can be but one answer to this question, and that in one word — *By conversion.*

To these men may be applied the description which the apostle gives of the Gentile state of the Ephesians — dead in trespasses and sins; without Christ; having no hope, and without God in the world; alienated from the life of God, and ignorant of heavenly things through the blindness of

thought to support, is the supposition that every one inherits a thoroughly depraved nature, which lies under an eternal curse, and which can be made better only by a *literal* new creation, to which the power of God alone is adequate. This, of course, renders a supernatural regeneration necessary. These two doctrines stand and fall together. The one is an unavoidable consequence of the other. Those who maintain different views of the nature which man has received from God, are not bound to receive a tenet which stands on no ground but that of total depravity — a tenet which is essential to Calvinism, but not to Christianity.

their hearts. So far as this description is applicable to them, they also, like the Ephesians, must put off the old and corrupt man, and be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man, who, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. This is conversion; and nothing short of this can be rightly called conversion. The bad man must become good; the sinful, holy; the irreligious, religious; the thoughtless and worldly, who have lived only for present good, must give their thoughts to God, and live for eternity, — must renew the spirit of their minds, as well as the corruption of the outward man.

Upon this point, I am fearful that we do not think and insist sufficiently. Many, indeed, have a settled dislike to all language of this sort; and when you speak to them of conversion or regeneration, they at once suspect you of fanaticism, and shut their ears to all that can be said. Undoubtedly a great deal of madness and mischief has been practised in the world, under shelter of these names, and the sober part of mankind have become disgusted at the extravagances which they have sanctioned. But certainly it cannot be wise to throw away a doctrine because some have abused it; for the best doctrines have been perverted and abused. The simple question is, What must be done with those men who have passed from infancy to age careless of their souls, and guided by no religious principles? How are such to become Christians, except by conversion or regeneration, or — I am not solicitous about the *name;* call it what you please — without a change of their dispositions, principles, and habits? If you will tell me how, I will urge the matter no further. If you tell me of any method by which a man, selfish, sensual, worldly, ambitious, proud, vicious, impious, can become humble, meek, spiritual, righteous, and devout, without a change of his dis-

positions, without being renewed in the spirit of his mind,— then I will give up the point at once. It is clear as the shadow on the dial that it is impossible. And I fear that we suffer ourselves to think of it too little. We suffer men to grow up in bad habits, their affections devoted to present objects, making an idol of sensual good, and forgetful of their accountableness at last; and then we hope that they will become fit for heaven very easily, will enter on the way of truth, holiness, and salvation, without doing any great violence to their former partialities, or greatly sacrificing their favorite desires. But is not this preposterous? Can there be conceived a greater change than that which they need?—a change of the very object of life, of the very principles of conduct, and of the prevalent dispositions of the soul. It is impossible that this should not be a great work, and important as it is great; and we wrong our fellow-men if we suffer them to imagine it small and easy, and of little consequence. Words cannot express the importance of the Christian character; and we cannot say too much of the importance of that change which is necessary to produce it where it does not exist.

The unwillingness of many to believe that conversion, or regeneration, is necessary to any man, has principally, perhaps wholly, arisen from the injudicious and irrational manner in which the doctrine is oftentimes stated and defended. They have heard it declared that man is entirely incapable of doing any thing in it by his own exertions, and that it is wholly, in its commencement, progress, and completion, the arbitrary and sovereign work of God's spirit, whose influences he imparts or withholds at his pleasure. This statement has appeared to them to take away the guilt of the unconverted, and to destroy the doctrine of accountableness; while, laying great stress upon ardent, rapturous, indefina-

ble feelings, it has invited and encouraged fanaticism, and cherished spiritual pride, by the belief that they were all the result of God's special and distinguishing love. But the objections of a rational mind to *this* doctrine of regeneration, are wholly inapplicable to that which I am contending for, as the doctrine of the gospel. I speak of nothing arbitrary, mysterious, or fanatical; but of a change in dispositions, affections, and character, to which any man is competent in the use of his natural powers, assisted by the means which the religion of Christ puts within his reach, and by those divine influences which are bestowed upon all who need. With the knowledge and faith of the gospel, it is in the power of any man to turn to God, *the spirit helping his infirmities.* If the sinner would attain the Christian character and hope, he must diligently set himself to *work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.* It is then that *God will work in him to will and to do, of his good pleasure.* Without this diligence, the influences of the spirit are as useless, as the sunshine and rain of heaven are to him who leaves his field, uncultivated, to run to waste.

We have thus learned, in answer to our inquiry, that the sincere and true disciples of Jesus Christ are some of them formed by a gradual growth in the regular education and discipline of life; while others are brought out from amidst a vicious world by a change in their views, feelings, dispositions, and principles of action, not different in kind, though less in degree, from that by which heathen sinners were originally called to the church.

III. Our third question is, How SHALL A MAN SATISFY HIMSELF THAT HE IS A CHRISTIAN?

There are many tests of Christian standing presented in the New Testament, differing according to the circum-

stances of those to whom they are applied, which it might be useful to every one to collect and accommodate to his own case. But there is none so often repeated, and with so much emphasis, as that of *obedience*. "*Ye are my friends*," said our Lord, "IF YE DO WHATSOEVER I COMMAND YOU." This saying of Jesus is the more deserving our regard, because it was solemnly uttered during his last interview with his disciples, on the night before he suffered; and he evinced his sense of its importance by repeating it, though in a varied form, not less than five several times.* If it were a sure and sufficient test for his disciples at that time, it must be so for all others.

It is true that, on the same occasion, he told them, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have *love one to another*." To the same purpose the apostle John — "By this do we know that we have passed from death unto life, because *we love the brethren*." These passages would seem to imply that the sure test of Christian standing is brotherly love. But brotherly love is *one of the commandments* of Christ, even his new and special commandment. It is therefore included in the text which I quoted; and this is better as a universal guide, because more comprehensive, comprising every other rule or guide which might be selected or named. It coincides also with the whole spirit and purpose of the New Testament, and with the most frequently repeated declarations both of our Savior and the apostles. When the young ruler inquired, "Good master, what shall I do that I may have eternal life?" our Lord's answer was, "*Keep the commandments*." When told that his mother and brethren desired to see him, he replied, "Who is my mother, or my brethren? Whosoever shall *do the will of God*, the

* See John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24, and v. 8, 14.

same is my sister, and brother, and mother." He declared that the man *who heareth and doeth his sayings* is like him who builds his house upon a rock, which nothing can overthrow; and that it is he only who *doeth the will* of his Father, who shall enter the kingdom of heaven. To the same purpose the apostle Paul — "Not the *hearers* of the law, but the *doers* of it shall be justified." And again he says that eternal life is promised to those who seek it by *patient continuance in well doing*. Passages of this import might be greatly multiplied, which would prove that the test I have selected is but the echo of the universal doctrine of the gospel.

It recommends itself also by its *simplicity and easy application*, as well as by the stress laid upon it by our Lord and the apostles. In the work of self-examination it directs the mind at once. It leaves no room for shuffling or evasion, but presents a direct, *home* question. We can be at no loss how to put it, or how to ascertain the reply. It is on a point which admits of evidence, clear, distinct, positive, undeniable evidence. There is no escaping by means of the obscurity of the thing inquired for, through any vagueness or equivocation. But, *Have I kept the commandments? Do I do whatsoever I am commanded?* are questions so intelligible, plain, and pointed, that we are compelled to see their meaning, and feel the reply.

In all these respects, how greatly has this an advantage over other tests, which are sometimes used for determining our Christian standing! If it be certain *doctrines*, we could not be certain, amidst the unavoidable differences of those who even most nearly agree, that we held them in the right sense, or that they were attained with sufficient fairness of inquiry, or are accompanied by all their right consequences. If it be certain *feelings*, they are something

which we cannot define, or express in words, or measure by any determinate standard, and which may be mixed with a thousand undetected imperfections. If it be certain *ceremonies* or *observances*, or a *comparison* of ourselves with other men, or any past *experience* of religion, it is obvious that they are all very fallacious and uncertain, and leave never-failing room for doubt, uneasiness, and apprehension.

But when we come to the test of *keeping the commandments*, all is clear, settled, and unambiguous. It is only to know what they are, which is easily known, and the question is answered as soon as it is asked. Any man, who looks at his life and character, can tell whether he have kept the commandments or not. Nothing but the most criminal carelessness and unfaithfulness can prevent his discovering it.

It should be considered, too, that this is the only test which is at all difficult, or amounts to an actual trial. External homage, of whatever sort, is easy. The hypocrite can give it. Inflamed zeal may be superficial, or constitutional, or unsanctified passion. Modes of faith may be, and most commonly are, the mechanical result of education or circumstances. They are given a man by his parents and teachers, not by his own efforts or by the Scriptures. There are very few of whom it is not evident, that, if educated in a different way and with other companions, they would have held a different faith. These things, therefore, leave uncertain the real state and character of a man. But *obedience* is by his own personal effort and trial; oftentimes demanding severe and toilsome labor, and requiring occasional sacrifices and privations, which demonstrate his sincerity, and the strength of his principle, and put beyond question the submission of his soul to God. There can be no

doubt concerning the man whose obedience is uniform and universal.

Besides, this rule of our Lord, short as it is, is far more comprehensive than any other. It comprises every thing. It omits nothing. Not a question concerning Christian character or duty can arise which this does not embrace. And here it is important to prevent misapprehension. When we say that a Christian is known by his *keeping the commandments*, there are many ready to object to the assertion, and say that the standard is altogether insufficient; that is going no deeper than the outside; that is neglecting internal principle and purity; for that the commandments may be kept from worldly motives, by a man who possesses nothing of Christian spirituality.

But this objection appears to be wholly founded in mistake. We consider that the internal principle is as much a *part* of the commandment as the outward action, and that no man keeps the commandments of the gospel, who observes only their external requirements. It were absurd to imagine otherwise, because one of the chief and most distinguishing commands is, that the heart be pure and the motive good. Impurity of heart, or a bad motive, breaks the command just as much as murder, or fraud, or false witness. It is a very erroneous notion, therefore, that the "commandments" only relate to external conduct. There are commandments for faith, repentance, humility, heavenly-mindedness, spiritual-mindedness, and every holy thought and exalted spiritual exercise. Every Christian feeling, desire, and disposition, are as much comprehended in them, as sobriety of deportment and honesty in dealings. They are all, consequently, comprised in that test of Christian standing which I have named and recommended. The question, there, is not, Have you done *part* of what I commanded? but, Have you done

whatsoever I commanded? Not, Have you observed the rules which concern external morals? but, Have you observed *all* the rules of Christ's gospel? And surely you would not think of omitting, among these, those rules respecting the inner man, and the conduct and discipline of the soul, which are, in fact, the most peculiar and positive of the whole.

So that the expression is not so confined and limited as might be supposed, but, perhaps, is as extensive as could be chosen. It sets us, in one word, upon inquiry, not only concerning our duties to man, but to God; not only concerning our actions, but our principles and motives; not only concerning the decent regularity of our deportment, but the spiritual state and exercises of our mind.

Thus, when we find an answer to the question we were asking, How shall a man know that he is a Christian? he may know it by finding that *he does whatsoever his Lord commands him.* Let him studiously and faithfully look at himself, and inquire how far his dispositions, feelings, tastes, principles, and mode of life, are regulated by the requirements and spirit of the gospel. Let him examine how far the love of God reigns within him; how far the love of his neighbor directs his conduct toward him; how far he maintains a proper watch, and government, and control, over his passions, propensities, and desires; particularly how far he possesses that peculiar spirit of benevolence, meekness, forbearance, and humility, which so distinguished the character of his Lord and Master. He may be sure that, so far as in these things he goes according to the commands of Christ, just so far he is a Christian, and so far as he is deficient in any of these, just so far he is no Christian.

I am confidently persuaded that every other test than

this is deceitful and inadequate. We may judge ourselves by any other standard, and only be led astray. But if we try ourselves by this, we cannot fail to know ourselves, except we be wilfully blind. When we find that *we have the dispositions and character of disciples*, we may be satisfied that we *are* disciples; but without them, all faith, and knowledge, and zeal, afford not the smallest satisfaction under heaven. This is no question of certain opinions, and doctrines, and forms, and observances, but of spirit and holiness: *if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his: without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Neither is it a question by what process we obtained this character, or whether we can remember its commencement, and detail its progress. The only important question is, Do we possess it? Every other inquiry is swallowed up in this. For we might repeat the truest stories of once-experienced raptures, and remove mountains by our faith, and overcome kingdoms by our zeal; and yet, if we be not "formed after God, in righteousness and true holiness," we should be much nearer the school of the Pharisees than that of Christ.

In regard to this subject, we have a most important and solemn duty of self-examination — an examination which relates to nothing less than our personal claims to share the name of Christ, and the hope and prospect of our souls for eternity. Of all questions which can come before us, there is none to be compared to this in deep and awful interest; none which it is of any consequence, comparatively speaking, that we should be in haste to settle. Let us, then, put away, for a moment, all indifference and levity, and try ourselves by the standard of Christ, and ascertain whether we be truly his disciples. The question is not whether we believe the Bible, whether we are pagans, or infidels. The

answer to this is easy, and we are too ready to be satisfied with it. But it relates to our personal claims to the hopes and promises of the gospel. "There are," says a certain writer,* "two sorts of Christianity; the one opposed to infidelity, the other opposed to worldly-mindedness." Suppose that we have the first, and hate infidelity; yet what will that avail us, if we have not also the second, and hate worldly-mindedness? Of what use to put the Bible under our arm, and walk forward in the way of sin? Of what use to possess the candle of the gospel, and boast of it, and yet put it under a bushel, and go about our deeds of darkness?

Upon this subject it is necessary to come home to ourselves, and meet the interrogation openly and fairly. It is simply, *Are we Christians?* not, Were we born in a Christian land, and baptized in a Christian church, and can we repeat a Christian creed? not, Have we the Bible in our houses, and do we attend public worship on the Sabbath? Let us not suffer ourselves to be led away by any such evasions. But *are we* CHRISTIANS — in deed and in truth, at heart, in spirit, thoroughly, earnestly? Do we receive from the Scriptures of Jesus their holy teachings, and faithfully follow them in life, conversation, and temper?

It can avail us nothing to temporize in this matter, and strive to stifle the conviction of our deficiencies. The state of things will not be changed by our refusing to see what it is. Better far that the inquiry should disturb us now, than that we should go sluggishly on, satisfied with our general standing and general name, till it is too late to recover ourselves. Let us, then, be honest, and know the truth. It can profit us nothing to have a name to live, while we are yet dead; to walk with the followers of Christ, and yet not be

* H. More's Practical Piety.

numbered with his friends. This is the most dreadful of all delusions, — the more dreadful, because voluntary. God grant, therefore, that by a timely knowledge of ourselves on earth, we may escape the shame and horror, at the last day, of seeing ourselves in our true characters for the first time; and of discovering, that although we have been all our lives long crying out, "Lord, Lord," — yet we must be rejected as strangers, because *we have not done the will of our Father who is in heaven.*

ESSAYS

ON

PRACTICAL RELIGION.

PREFACE.

THE following Essays are part of a series, the plan of which was sketched by Mr. Ware a short time before his death. I find a list of subjects for twenty-two essays; but only one appears to have been finished — that entitled "The Importance of Principle in Religion." The two others which are here published, though probably incomplete, are too valuable to be cast aside. One of Mr. Ware's favorite subjects of preaching and conversation was the importance of personal religion; and he would, no doubt, have prepared a most useful volume of essays, by the execution of the plan here alluded to, had his life been prolonged.

C. R.

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

It is surprising to observe the indifference of even serious people to personal religion. One would suppose that the personal claims of religion would be first and principally regarded; that men would chiefly recognize it as their own concern, and as having their own guidance and destiny in its keeping. Yet, if we might judge from their general appearance and style of remark, we might conclude that this was the last aspect in which they felt it important to regard it. They treat it as they do the statutes of the commonwealth, which deserve all respect as excellent in themselves and interesting to those whom they concern, but with which it is of no importance to any others to be acquainted. Doubtless the enactments respecting insurance and the decisions on maritime law are very wise and necessary; they regard the public good, and must be matters of great interest to those whose professions and business they regulate; but it is enough for me to know that they exist; I need not know what they are. Thus the community is made of citizens who believe the laws to be necessary and good, but who have no acquaintance with them, excepting as, in some accidental emergency, any of them may become applicable to their own case. The Christian world is full of men who treat the doctrines and laws of religion in precisely this manner. They yield it all honor as the light of the world and the guide of those who need its guidance; they think

that society would be unsafe without its institutions and influences; but as for making themselves familiar with it, attaching themselves to it heartily, and applying to it daily, hourly, for direction and aid, they do not dream of it. They regard it as a general, not a personal, obligation and blessing.

There are too many symptoms of a similar error even among those who esteem themselves decidedly religious persons. They are interested in the affairs of the church, always present at public worship, attentive to the minister, forward in promoting the interests of the society; but their zeal expends itself in these external manifestations; they give no proofs of a hearty interest in the principles of their faith, or of any great desire to subject their lives to its power. They would think it hard that their Christian standing should be questioned; and yet they give no intimation of any higher than a worldly life, and never assign any reason for their conduct excepting a worldly consideration.

There is danger, too, lest some should be drawn away from the culture of personal piety by the call at present made on believers for action in public abroad. Hurried from one plan of enterprise to another, their strength, their thoughts, their time, exhausted in planning, talking, and acting for others, they are in danger of ceasing to plan and act for themselves; and their very devotedness to the outward affairs of religion may hinder their attention to its influence within their own souls.

In these and various other ways is exhibited that indifference to personal religion of which I spoke. Instead of finding it, as we might expect, the subject of all others most absorbing and exciting, it is contemplated coolly, as some very respectable and decorous thing; but it calls up no glow of strong feeling, it rouses no anxious vigilance, it kindles

no desire of higher and higher excellence. Too many Christians are what the state of society in which they live makes them; they are formed by the pressure from without, not by the impulse from within; they would be just what they are, even if they had no religious faith; their virtue is conventional, not personal. It is the result of circumstances, not of effort; it is the secondary effect of Christianity, reflected from the characters around them, not its direct action on their own heart and will. They walk by the general light diffused through the atmosphere of the civilized world; they have lighted no lamp of their own from the great fountain; or, if once they did so, they have ceased to think it essential to keep it trimmed and burning, and it has gone out.

It is sad to perceive how this prevalence of the secondary influence of Christianity is permitted to hinder its primary influence. When it first dawned upon the world and acted by its immediate light upon the soul, when men could receive it only from the direct orb, then the fulness of its efficacy was witnessed, and the disciples were devoted with singleness of heart, in life and in death. But as the gospel became one of the permanent institutions of the world, men came to receive it from one another; to be satisfied with the little which was reflected from their neighbors; to be content with its indirect influences. It was a beautiful arrangement, indeed, of divine wisdom, that the race of man should be thus ameliorated; that they who would not yield themselves, as disciples and confessors, to the immediate control of truth, should, notwithstanding, be unable to escape its indirect control; that that light, as it entered the moral atmosphere of society, should be in so various ways reflected and refracted as to fill the whole circumference of human being, and penetrate every dwelling, and shine upon every

relation, so that none could walk in darkness if he would, so that even they who denied that it was from heaven should yet be partakers of its rays, and it should thus enlighten every man that cometh into the world. The philosopher and the skeptic may boast of their wisdom, and complacently publish their discoveries of intellectual and spiritual truth. They have been guided, though they may not own it, by this universal light which Christianity has diffused, by which society is pervaded, its modes of thinking, feeling, and judging on all subjects modified and colored, and from whose influences no mind in a Christian land can escape, any more than from those of the natural day. We cannot too much admire the provision thus widely made for the advancement and happiness of the world.

But it is attended with the misfortune that multitudes remain content with this remote and weaker action of divine truth, who ought to be seeking and enjoying its immediate and more vigorous influence. They take just that measure of religious character which happens to fall upon them as they move about in this religious community; they are not anxious or ambitious to increase it. They cast an occasional glance, it may be, at the sun above them; they turn a hasty and transient look at the holy record; but to bask in the full glory of the celestial radiance, to surrender their hearts and wills to the very words of the Master, and be guided directly and only by him, — this is not their purpose; this makes no part of their serious concern.

* * * * * *

THE

IMPORTANCE OF PRINCIPLE IN RELIGION.

The Christian community is full of men *partially* religious; of men who are satisfied to embrace the outside of their religion, and observe its forms and laws, without imbuing their hearts with its spirit, or causing its influences to pervade their temper and direct their tone of thought. Men are religious from birth, from education, from habit, from association; they are religious partially, thoughtlessly, coldly; they should be so heartily, devotedly, thoroughly. The chief reason is, they are not so from principle. If the religious life were founded on principle, instead of being left to accident, association, impulse, example, habit, it would be, more frequently than it is, the supreme and governing power in the character.

Principle is a different thing from knowledge, or feeling, or habit. Either of these may exist without it. A man is often seen with fervent affections, or well instructed in duty, or of perfectly correct habits, who yet is not a man of principle. Principle refers to the rule and the motive; it goes back to the origin and beginning. It is what the foundation is to the building, or the root to the tree, or the fountain to the stream. It is to the Christian what his axioms are to the geometrician, what the laws of light, and motion, and

attraction are to the natural philosopher. It is to his soul what the principle of gravitation is to the universe; pervaded by this, all the separate acts of his life keep their place, and all the detail of duty is regularly performed, just as the several bodies of the planetary system, being pervaded by this principle of gravitation, know their places, and run around their orbits, and never depart from the appointed course.

Being thus essential to the Christian character, we naturally trace to the neglect of it the lamentable deficiencies and inconsistencies which are so frequent among those who profess to be most deeply attached to a religious life. The great difficulty appears to lie in this, — and it exposes a copious source of practical error, — that they adopt and endeavor to follow religion, not as one thing — not as a perfect whole springing from one root, the several parts of which are indissolubly joined together, and not to be severed from each other any more than the limbs from the body; but they address themselves to its distinct and separate parts; they attend to a certain set of doctrines, or a certain list of rules, good in themselves, but not when taken up independently of any thing else. When, therefore, a man has learned those doctrines, it does not follow that he conforms to those rules; or he may conform to the rules, yet reject the doctrines. They have no connection with each other in his mind. He has regarded them wholly independent of each other. So, also, where he practises one class of duties, it does not follow that he is equally faithful in another. The motives which prompt him to be honest do not make him temperate; the influences which cause him to love his neighbor do not lead his affections to God; his conscientious punctuality in public worship does not teach him to forgive those who have offended him. He acts on partial motives, and so separates from each other branches of duty which are properly insep-

arable. He wants that great fundamental motive, reason, rule, called *principle*, which would guide, control, regulate every thing — pervading the whole system of thought and action with one uniform, consistent, ever-operating influence, which never relaxes, and from which nothing escapes.

What would be the condition of the sciences and the arts, if their professors were to hold or teach them in this loose method? What would be thought of the geometrician who should know nothing of his science but some of its detached details, a few unconnected problems or modes of operation, without having settled and arranged in his mind the *principles* of the science? How would he succeed in practice if he could not recur instinctively to those principles in every situation of perplexity or novelty? So, too, the chemist, the astronomer, the navigator, — how would they be involved in error and driven into peril who should depend upon any acquaintance with their science gained from insulated experiments and lying in detached parcels, without any common principles in the mind by which they are classed and to which they may be referred! If the right practice of these sciences is inwrought with their principles, so is the practice of religion. How can we hope for consistency and thoroughness where no fundamental axioms are kept in view?

The importance to be attached to this view is evident from a consideration of the nature of religion. Religion is not a prescribed list of duties, a specified catalogue of doctrines, a given round of ceremonies. It is properly a profound sentiment of the relation of ourselves to God and of God to ourselves, attended by the consequences of such a sentiment. To fall short of this is to fall short of religion. The various doctrines, acts, forms, which constitute the

visible and observable exterior of religion, are the consequences of the interior sentiment. If one strive to maintain them independently of that sentiment, he has no security for their genuineness or permanency; they may exist at some times, but there is no certainty that they will at others; or, if always, yet these are not religion, and cannot be transformed into religion. They are but the outward body, destitute of the mysterious vitality which alone gives it beauty and worth.

Religion is essentially spiritual. It commands and requires the performance of all moral acts in the outward life; but it does not consist in those acts: those acts may be performed without it, from other motives, from reasons of expediency, policy, and selfishness; and they are not, and cannot be, acts of the religious man, except they spring from the internal impulse of religious principle.

Hence it is plain that a man cannot become a religious Christian by the bare observation of the detached precepts of Christianity, any more than he can become a patriot by simply conforming to the promulgated laws of his country. This is done by multitudes who make no pretension to the character of patriots. This requires something deeper; it is a matter of the soul. Precepts effect little, except where there is a sentiment within to which they may be attached, and which may enforce obedience. What will you effect by the precept to be humble, in the man who has no faith or love strong enough to subdue his pride? What by the command to forgive injury, or to refrain from revenge, in him who has no settled regard for His authority who commands; but whose principle of honor is stronger than that of religion, and his passions stronger than either? You may set before men the virtues of meekness and temperance, purity and love, generosity and piety, in such winning beauty that all

shall admire and love; but they will be to them as unaffecting as the cold marble images to which the heathen gave the names of the virtues, until there be breathed into them the breath of a living principle.

Agreeable to all this is the method of instruction adopted by our Savior. His teaching, undoubtedly, was in great part preceptive, and consisted much of practical directions for the conduct of life. But a little examination shows us that these are to be regarded, not as unconnected rules, but as so many exemplifications of large principles, and specimens of the right manner of applying them. Thus he laid peculiar stress on the regulation of the heart. He always implied that, if it be kept right, a good life will follow; if unregulated, a bad life will be the consequence. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, thefts, false witness, blasphemy. The same inference is to be drawn from the circumstance that he declares love to God and love to men to be the sum and substance of religion. These two commandments are not so much the injunction of special duties, as the inculcation of a general principle, which, being established in the heart, insures the cultivation of all right dispositions and the performance of all right acts. Love, added Paul, is the fulfilling of the law.

The same inference is to be drawn from the whole mode of instruction adopted in the sacred writings. It has been observed of this volume, that its excellence as a guide of men consists, not in its furnishing a distinct rule for every situation and circumstance of life; — such a guide would be too cumbrous; the multiplicity of its directions would confound rather than aid; — but rather in its inculcating a general, comprehensive spirit, which, being ingrafted in the mind, should serve as a universal index, superior to all rules, and rendering rules unnecessary.

This spirit or principle, thus every where recognized in the sacred writings, appears there under various names and a diversity of descriptions. Sometimes it is called Love, and then it is written, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Sometimes it is Fear, and then, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Sometimes it is Faith, and then it is said to work by love and overcome the world. And this explains to us how it happens that the whole duty of man is represented by so different expressions in different parts of Scripture, — in one place the term fear representing all, in another love, in a third faith, and in a fourth holiness. In all these instances, we perceive that, whatever the word may be, it is used to signify the religious principle; and either of the graces specified is sufficient, and is the whole, because it implies that fundamental principle on which the whole fabric rests.

And there is a great advantage in this mode of representation, since it is adapted to the variety of dispositions and modes of thought existing among men. In human nature, as every where else, it has pleased the Creator to give existence to an infinite variety; and to this variety a regard must be had in the provision which is made for human culture and perfection. That which is most effectual with one man may make little impression on another; and that view of a great truth which commends itself to the acceptance of this, may be a barren and heartless proposition to that. We find, accordingly, that the great truths of religion are set forth in the sacred volume in a great variety of attitudes, that so by all means some may be won to receive them. In this way provision has been made for the diversity of sects which have arisen in the church; and especially the peculiarities of individual temper have been kindly met. One man seizes on the idea of love as the presiding spirit, and it becomes

the one absorbing, leading consciousness of his life; he literally dwells in love, and knows nothing of fear. A man of a different constitution of mind is struck with some other view, and takes it into his mind as the governing thought. Each finds his way to holiness and God, because each is thus brought into immediate and sacred contact with all the truths that constitute religion; as if the holy temple of the soul's immortal life were entered by several beautiful gates, and each should come in at the door opening nearest to his own familiar dwelling; yet all, having entered, find themselves alike in the spacious courts of universal truth, and mingle with equal acceptance in the worship at the sacred altars.

It is not easy to over-estimate the importance of the view I have been considering, to him who is seeking a guide in practical religion. It points out to him what is essential to his consistency and safety. It furnishes to him the clew which will lead him through every perplexing labyrinth of duty. It becomes to him a sort of instinct which decides at once what is right, and delivers him from uncertainty and delay. He who attempts without this to walk the path of virtue, dependent on the letter of the law and the suggestions of his own unaided thought, will often be perplexed in his decisions, and will find his progress uncertain, interrupted, unsatisfactory. His virtue fluctuates with changing circumstances, and is at the mercy of every temptation. He does right from whim, is just by accident, is generous from interest, is pure from selfishness, and is unjust, ungenerous, impure, when circumstances or passion decide it to be advisable. He is blown about by every wind of doctrine, more anxious to seem right than to be so, and to satisfy the expectations and standard of those around him, than to conform to the law of duty in his own mind. If circum-

stances prove favorable, such a man may pass through the world without reproach; but any sudden crisis of affairs may overthrow him in a moment, and disclose the insecurity of his foundation. But he who has built his virtue on principle, is independent of circumstances, and unaffected by external changes. The winds may blow, the floods may come, the rains descend and beat upon him, but he stands amidst all steadfast as a rock.

It is in vain that one would trust the security or the progress of his character to any other ground. He may have ascertained the evidences and the authority of his faith, he may have pursued it by careful investigation to its divine origin, and may have logically demonstrated its everlasting obligation. But it is one thing to know a truth, and quite another to feel its power. And of what avail the study of the records of Christianity, and the most extensive and curious acquaintance with its doctrines and history, if there be no deep-seated sentiment within, which appropriates to itself all that knowledge, and makes application of it to the conscience and the life? Or of what avail his occasional forms of devotion, and acts of charity, if there be not this internal regulator to render them uniform, habitual, permanent? How shall he insure the coëxistence of those virtues which are essential to the completeness of the man, if there dwell not within him this common bond of attraction and union? How will he hope for progress in excellence, if he possess not that perennial fountain within him of excitement and growth? And where will be the satisfaction and peace of his spirit? Even supposing him to maintain a reasonable steadfastness and consistency in external duty, yet what can he know of the peculiar, characteristic happiness of a religious mind, unless the affections be penetrated with this living and glowing sentiment?

If there were no other attendant evils, those who think, and separate the acts of a moral and religious being from the principle they spring from, might find one here sufficient to alarm and check them. They fail of the happiness they seek. Happiness, as daily experience may tell us, depends upon the state of the mind, the frame and temper of the inward man; and he may be rendered miserable by the misrule within, while every requisition of external morality is rigidly observed. Therefore they who place religion in this outward obedience, to the neglecting of the principle that rules within, miserably fail of the felicity of their nature. If man, indeed, were related only to the beings and scenes of this earth, they would be right; but if he be related to the Infinite and Eternal Spirit, with whom he can have no external, but only a spiritual intercourse, — if he be destined for other scenes, for which nothing can fit him but the preparation of a spiritual culture, — then their error is deep and ruinous. If life were only a season of enjoyment, a mere voyage of pleasure, over which no clouds or storms ever pass, then there would be something plausible in their system, which resolves all duty into care for the present convenience and order. But, since it is a season of change and probation, of heavy trials, of sad exposures, and of certain death, they but throw away the staff of their support, and put out the light that should cheer them. There is a gloominess amid the disappointments of the world, which nothing can dissipate but the familiar sentiment of piety, which perceives a faithful and kind hand controlling all, and leans upon a Father's love. But where is the consolation for him who has persuaded himself of the sufficiency of an external regularity, but can turn to no principle within, which recognizes the dealings of the great Parent, and devoutly relies on his equity and love?

Then there is the momentous concern of the preparation for hereafter. When the spirit lies waiting to be gone, and casts its farewell glance at all it knew and loved below, there is, indeed, satisfaction for it in the thought that the duties of life have been done, that no one has been defrauded, and that friends have been kindly treated. We may not undervalue the worth of this testimony of the conscience. But the sinking immortal at that hour looks forward as well as backward; surveys with anxious thought the world he is approaching, as well as that which he is leaving. There, he feels, he is to commence a spiritual existence in new spheres and in higher connections. There he is to meet the God who made him; there he is to see the Savior who redeemed him; there he is to join the spirits of the just made perfect, and the company of the angels. And will he not feel, that, for that scene, and that company, and those enjoyments, he needs a preparation of heart, affection, spirit, which the performance of duties growing out of his temporal relations has not made? Must he not feel that only the possession of an inward principle could fit him for, and enable him to relish, that spiritual state? Without that spiritual relish, not even heaven could give happiness. Let him enter its regions of glory, let him be received to the company of the blessed, give him the crown of glory and the harp of gold, and let the beauty of the throne of God pour its light around his feet, — there is no enjoyment in it all to him; it is only a weariness; for the spiritual relish is wanting; his tastes and habits have been formed on the relations and pleasures of a bodily existence, and none else have any charm for him.

Is it not amazing, when we seriously give ourselves to reflections like these, that we are so content with the worldliness of our common life? Is it not amazing that we can

rest satisfied with this ordinary routine of formal existence, which goes not a step beyond the decent acquittal of the prescribed task of the hour, and gives no heed to the demands of the life within us and beyond us? If there be a spirit in man, virtue cannot be a thing of present expediency and social regularity; it must be an inwoven principle, deep-seated and fervent, affecting the state of mind no less than the conduct. If that spirit is immortal, the holiness which belongs to it can be no mere adaptation to the exigencies and relations of this earthly existence, but must be a high, immortal, insatiable desire, aspiration, passion, for an excellence independent of the body, unrelated to time, such as dwells only in the retirements of heaven, and thirsts for its peculiar joys. Knowledge must cease, prophecies fail, and all earthly possessions decay and disappear; but the ethereal, celestial PRINCIPLE of goodness and felicity survives, indestructible and everlasting. If it dwell in us now, it will conduct us to duty as nothing else can. Then, even on earth, as the apostle says, we shall dwell in God, and finally shall dwell in heaven.

RELIGION

A RESTRAINT AND AN EXCITEMENT.

I HAVE often had occasion to call to mind the remark which once fell from a friend in conversation, to the effect that much practical error arises from men's looking on religion as a restraint alone, instead of considering it as an excitement also. The thoughts suggested by this hint are of most various and extensive application in the whole process of the religious life. What is that process, in fact, but the subjection of the soul to that will of God which restrains from all that is evil and excites to all that is excellent?

Undoubtedly the first aspect in which religion presents itself to man, is that of restraint. Its office is that of prohibition. Its commandments run in the language of denial — Thou shalt *not*. It forbids certain gratifications which nature craves. It insists on the denial of certain propensities, on limiting the indulgence of certain desires, on refraining from certain states of mind, and certain courses of conduct. It requires self-control, circumspection, thoughtfulness. It is thus a universal and ever-present restraint. He who acknowledges its authority feels that neither his body nor his spirit, neither his talents nor his time, are his own; they are the Lord's. He may neither live to himself nor die to himself. His business, his recreations, the emotions of his heart, the purposes and plans of his life, the

accents of his lips, the demeanor of every hour, are to be placed under the control of moral and religious principle.

But for a man to stop here, and fancy his religious culture done, would be a most absurd and pernicious error. This is but the beginning. This is only the negative. He knows what he must not do and be. But what must he do? What must he be? Will not religion teach him this? Religion is therefore an excitement to right action as well as a prohibition from wrong; it urges the heart to attach itself to what is lovely and pure, as well as to avoid what is low and base; it prompts to the glory of doing what is noble, as well as deters from the sin of doing what is mean and vile; it stimulates to action in every way of improvement and goodness. So that nothing can be more erroneous than their opinion who fancy it severe and morose, occupied wholly in checking the flow of the spirits and damping the ardor of the feelings, never speaking but to chide folly, and presenting forever the dark side of things. On the contrary, what more animating than its promises! what more inspiriting than the scenes to which it invites in the future! what more cheerful than its pursuits of useful labor and affectionate toils of beneficence and hours of elevated contemplation! And as to its showing the dark side of things, it is that which alone shows that every thing has a bright side, and unveils it to the eye of desponding humanity. He who sees only the prohibition, and feels only the restraint, without having his heart stirred with a holy purpose of action, and a joy in the anticipation of better things, has learned as yet only the alphabet of religious culture; he is a babe bound about with swaddling clothes, with no use nor enjoyment of a free and active existence.

It is clear, therefore, that wherever there is the true operation of the religious principle, it must perform both of

these functions alike. It must control and impel. No one will throw off the restraint, and impetuously follow the impulse; no one will be satisfied with the restraint alone, but will seek a higher and more active life.

Yet it is equally clear that it will be principally felt as a restraint *in the beginning of the religious career*. When the struggle for ascendency first takes place between the sensual, worldly principle and the religious principle, the latter prevails, if at all, by throwing a restraint over the worldly and sensual. This is the first step. It lays a check on the indulgence of selfish desires, and animal pleasures, and every wrong propensity. Like the voice which was heard in the wilderness, it announces the coming of God's kingdom in the soul by the cry, Repent! Quit these false pleasures; correct your taste for this false happiness; abandon these unworthy habits.

This is unwelcome and irksome. But as the progress of the religious life goes on, as the man becomes better acquainted with its sublime spirit, and is more habitually observant of its laws, he comes to be less sensible to the restraint, and more alive to its quickening and exciting powers. It ceases to be to him a burden, and grows into a pleasure; it is no longer a hardship, it is a delight. The privations which were at first severe, are no longer privations. The duties that were at first hard because new, are now familiar, and he is fond of them. Like the beginner in any new occupation, art, or study, he is for a long time awkward and embarrassed by the strangeness of his position, and by mere unaccustomedness to the rules and routine of his pursuit. The learner on a musical instrument is perplexed and pained by the rules which operate as a distressing restraint upon him; but after a time they become familiar and natural, and nothing can be an apter emblem of freedom than the motion of his flying fingers as they kiss

the strings. So with the young Christian. For a time harassed and discontented by the unusual restraint, he by-and-by feels it no more, but pushes forward with kindled and delighted mind, pursuing the straightest path of right, and conscious only of pursuing his pleasure. The restraint is upon him; it is less possible than ever to cast it off; but it is lighter than ever, because it is willingly borne, and because it helps him to accomplish the object which he now has most devotedly at heart.

There is a striking passage in the First Epistle of John which accords with this statement and helps to illustrate it. There is no fear, he says, in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. Here we have the distinction between the restraining and the exciting principle we have been speaking of. The mind is first impressed with the *fear* of God, of his displeasure, of committing sin, and of the consequences of sin, — a most reasonable fear. This operates as a restraint. It is a check on the heart's sinful propensities and the unprincipled pursuits of the life. But so far there is pain, dissatisfaction, torment; for the soul is as yet reluctant and unwilling. Soon, however, the study of God's character and will unveils that glorious Being in attributes so adorable and amiable, a nearer acquaintance discloses so beautifully his fatherly purposes and grace, that the soul is won to his love, and no longer so much fears his wrath as longs for his friendship. Here is an excitement. The man longs and labors to please this Father, whose excellences are so lovely, and whose will is so beneficent. He comes to forget that he is dreadful; he loses thought of the divine terrors; his *love casts out the fear* which he once trembled under; he glows, burns, rejoices, and presses forward in confidence and hope; and there is no fear, there can be no fear, for he is perfect in love. He is conscious of no restraint; he is sensible of no control; he indulges his

predominant desire; he follows the impulse of his own excited spirit, which, by the power of love, has become conformed to the will of God. He rises as by his own proper motion, as on eagle's wings, as on the easy and familiar pinions of angels. When he first put them on, he was embarrassed by the unaccustomed members, and moved heavily; nothing, perhaps, but the dread of impending evil would have roused him to tempt the upper air. But when the flight has become familiar, and he has reached the purer atmosphere above him, and got a nearer view of the splendors of the upper regions, he feels an excitement which urges him on spontaneously and joyfully; it is rapture to him to press forward; far from enduring any restraint, he is enjoying the most unbounded liberty.

He that feareth, it is added, is not made perfect in love; that is to say, he who feels his religion to be a burdensome affair, and his movements fettered by it, has not attained to that true state of the mind which makes all a delight. He has made but slight progress in the divine life who does his Christian duties only because he is afraid to neglect them, and whose faith is therefore always checking him from doing wrong, instead of urging him to what is right.

All this serves to explain how it happens that so many, with a partial devotion to religion, declare themselves disappointed in the happiness which flows from it. They have looked for the satisfactions and raptures of which others have spoken, but do not find them. Instead of serenity, they meet but uneasiness and despondency. They are ready to abandon in despair a pursuit which does little else than keep them in a state of conscious inquietude.

This is easily explained. The peculiar and boasted happiness of religion belongs to him whose soul is filled with its temper of perfect love; who, under the impulsive excitement of its glorious convictions, in the glow of an affectionate

ardor, moves on without restraint or fear; having no desire, or feeling, or habit, in opposition to duty. Now, the beginner cannot be in this state. He is still under control. The yoke is not so familiar as to be easy; the burden has not been borne long enough to be light. He has but recently undertaken a new system of government over his affections, thoughts, propensities, will, temper, words, actions; it must of necessity be long before they can all be brought perfectly to acquiesce and live under the new law in harmony and peace. If he suffer himself to be swayed by a romantic expectation of sudden and complete bliss, he will be inevitably disappointed. Religious happiness is to be looked for just in proportion to religious attainment. There may be a thrill of rapture upon the soul at the first disclosure to it of divine truth; there may be moments of high feeling and ineffable delight from many occasional experiences in the path of duty; but the equal, uniform, satisfied serenity, "the sober certainty of waking bliss," that nothing interrupts or diminishes, this is the attainment of a long pilgrimage, this is the result of that patient perseverance which leads to experience, and gives birth to the hope that maketh not ashamed.

Hence the remark is obvious, that the great attainments of religious character are made under the exciting impulses of generous feelings and the encouragements of a divine love. The action of fear is altogether insufficient. It stops far short of the true end. It may begin, but it cannot finish. It can do nothing more than restrain from evil; it cannot lift to excellence. They who are actuated by it may take religion for their law, but it cannot be their pleasure; it is the task-work of a slave, not the affectionate compliance of a son. It is in perpetual and irritating opposition to their favorite desires, when it ought to be in conformity with them. It grasps every effort, repines at every sacrifice, and

achieves nothing beyond a poor mediocrity of sluggish and creeping virtue.

How much of sad error is there amongst us through this misapprehension! Instead of giving up ourselves, heartily and wholly, to the generous exhilaration of a devoted soul, we hold back reluctant. What wonder that we are so poor in goodness! We dwarf ourselves by looking only at the prohibition, the watching, and the rebuke; like thoughtless and foolish children, who shrink from every task as an evil, and fancy they make great gain by every lesson they escape. We should be more wise; we should regard religion as our friend and brother, rather than our task-master; it should be more frequently spoken of as such, in terms of affection and cheerfulness, not of hesitation and awe. Let it not be always represented as beginning in terror, and watered by tears, and closing in struggles. Let not the heavenly visitant be always described as pining on a sick bed, or clothed in weeds of mourning, or borne down by calamity, or gasping in the agonies of dissolution; — as if faith were good for nothing but the chambers of disease and the house of sorrow; as if piety were the inseparable companion of life's evils, and not also the hightener and friend of its dearest joys; as if it were the daughter of remorse and the sister of woe, and not rather the companion of all innocent pleasure and the queen of the heart's deepest satisfactions. We must do it more justice; we must array it in its own bright robes; associate it with the most cheerful objects of nature and all the happiest hours of life; we must know it to be that love which casts out all torment and fear, and changes the painfulness of duty into the spontaneous impulse of inclination.

TWO LETTERS,

ON THE

GENUINENESS OF THE VERSE 1 JOHN v. 7,

AND ON THE

SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENT

FOR

UNITARIANISM,

ADDRESSED TO THE

REV. ALEXANDER M'LEOD, D. D.

OF NEW YORK.

TWO LETTERS.

LETTER I.

REVEREND SIR:

I AM sensible that, in addressing these Letters to you, I am taking a liberty which nothing but the importance of the occasion could excuse. The deference and respect which are due to a stranger of your age and standing should have kept me silent, did not a powerful sense of duty to the uncorrupted Word of God, and of my obligations to that system of religious faith which I believe it to contain, urge me to speak. This must be my apology. My persuasion of the importance of Christian truth, and of a careful watch by those who are set for its defence, lest its records should be corrupted, is too strong to suffer me to be silent, when I conceive it to be within my power to render any service, however feeble, to the cause of religious knowledge. I came to this city, as some of my brethren had done before, for the purpose of aiding a small band of Unitarian believers to enjoy the worship and ordinances of the gospel according to the dictates of their consciences; and when, upon attending the religious service of your church, I found not only the principles of their faith assailed, but assailed by the use of a sentence which is generally held to be no part of the Bible, I felt myself bound, in their defence, and in defence of the truth, to make this public address to yourself. I

desire to do it respectfully, for I feel no disrespect; and if, as I fear may be the case, I should express myself with great confidence, I beg you would do me the justice to believe that it is not from the spirit of opposition, but is the religious confidence of one who thinks himself called to support the purity and integrity of God's revelation, in a point where he is convinced there is hardly the shadow of a doubt.

It is not my object to make any general defence of the faith against which you have been preaching; much less to complain at your taking an opportunity to warn your people against what you esteem a dangerous error. Your duty to your conscience and to them required it of you; and I would be the last to advocate any abridgment of the liberty of speech in the pulpit. It is not because you have defended Trinitarianism that I ask to be heard; that you had an unquestionable right to do; but because you defended it upon ground which, it appears to me, you had no right to take. When I went up to worship in your church, on the evening of the last Sabbath in April, nothing could exceed my astonishment at hearing you announce as your text that celebrated verse — *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.* 1 John v. 7. I did not readily recover from my surprise. The opinion which is universally expressed by the learned respecting this verse came fresh to my recollection; and it was with difficulty I could persuade myself that I had heard it quoted as a part of the Christian Scriptures in that sacred place. It was true I had been told that some ministers had lately quoted it as authentic; but I had taken it for granted they must be uninformed and ignorant men; for I had never yet seen reason to doubt the assertion of an able theologian, "that no man of tolerable learning or

fairness, at the present day, would think of using it." But now I found it adduced by one to whom I could attribute neither ignorance nor unfairness; and what, then, should relieve my wonder?

My surprise at your use of this text has not ceased. The learned of the present day, throughout the religious world, have agreed, after a long and laborious examination, in pronouncing it no part of the original Scriptures. All who are most competent to judge, Trinitarians as well as Unitarians, with one voice, and with scarcely any reserve, declare it to be an unauthorized addition to the Epistle of John; so that it is, with one consent, thrown out of the Trinitarian controversy. I may well, therefore, be astonished, as I am ignorant of the reasons upon which you have made up your mind, that you should argue from it as genuine.

I do not forget that you told us that it had been your object, in a preceding discourse, "to establish its genuineness as a part of Scripture." I could not suspect you, indeed, of omitting, as some have done, so important a consideration; and I cannot but regret that I had not the opportunity of hearing it discussed. For I acknowledge I am at a loss to conjecture whence you could have gathered sufficient proof to outweigh all those circumstances of evidence which have for so long a time put the question at rest. It would be wrong, however, to deal in mere assertion on this subject. I beg leave, therefore, to lay before you the language of a few respectable writers, — all Trinitarians, — whose decisions on this subject, of which they were well able to judge, have been thought conclusive.

Let me first ask your attention to the *Eclectic Review*, the religious character of which is unsuspiciously Orthodox. The passage has been frequently quoted; but the very honorable and decided stand which it takes in behalf of the

purity of the sacred text renders it worthy of perpetual remembrance.

"Upon this," says the writer, "we need not spend many words. It is found in NO Greek manuscript, ancient or modern, except one, to which we shall presently advert; in no ancient version, being interpolated only in the later transcripts of the Vulgate. Not one of the Greek fathers recognizes it, though many of them collect every species and shadow of argument, down to the most allegorical and shockingly ridiculous, in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity; though they often cite the words immediately contiguous, both before and after; and though, with immense labor and art, they extract from the next words the very sense which this passage has in following times been adduced to furnish. Of the *Latin* fathers, not one has quoted it, till Eucherius of Lyons, in the middle of the fifth century; and in his works *there is much reason to believe that it has been interpolated.*"

After this summary of the evidence, the writer proceeds, in the following striking and decided tone: "Under these circumstances, we are UNSPEAKABLY ASHAMED that any modern divines should have fought, *pedibus et unguibus*, for the retention of a passage SO INDISPUTABLY SPURIOUS. We could adduce half a dozen, or half a score, passages of ample length, supported by better authority than this, but which are rejected in every printed edition and translation."

The learned Griesbach, another believer in the Trinity, whose ability to judge in questions of this nature will be universally acknowledged, makes use of language equally strong with that just quoted. "If it were worth while," he says, "I would undertake to defend *six hundred of the most futile and universally rejected readings* by testimonies and arguments equally numerous and valid, nay, in general, more

numerous and valid, than those which the advocates of this passage adduce; nor would the defenders of a genuine text have so many and weighty arguments to oppose to such an absurd attempt, as have been produced against the defenders of this verse. I wish those would seriously consider this, who may in future undertake to defend this text."

Bishop Lowth, another learned Trinitarian, is equally decided. "We have some wranglers in theology," he says, "sworn to follow their master, who are prepared to defend any thing, however absurd, should there be occasion. But I believe there is no one among us, in the least degree conversant with sacred criticism, and having the use of his understanding, who would be willing to contend for the genuineness of the verse 1 John v. 7." *

Michaelis, in his most learned and valuable Introduction to the New Testament, says, "It is very extraordinary that any man should *think* of opposing the testimony" in favor of this verse to the testimony against it. And again he says, "One would suppose that no critic, especially if a Protestant, would hesitate a moment to condemn as spurious a passage" supported by such feeble evidence as this. To each of these sentences he adds a summary of the evidence, which it is unnecessary to quote here.

Dr. Middleton, in his elaborate work on the Greek article, tells us that this passage is "now pretty generally abandoned as spurious;" and that if any one will study the controversy, "the probable result will be, that he will close the examination with a *firm belief that the passage is spurious.*" He adds afterward, "In the rejection of the controverted passage, learned and good men are now for the

* See this citation in the Christian Disciple, vol. i. p. 109.

most part agreed; and I contemplate with admiration and delight the gigantic exertions of intellect which have established this acquiescense."

Rosenmuller observes, "It is the opinion of most critics at the present day, that these words are spurious."

Mr. Wardlaw, a late zealous and eloquent defender of the doctrine of the Trinity, is no less positive. "Certainly," he says, "this text should have been entitled to hold the first place, had its genuineness not been disputed, or disputed, as that of many texts has been, on slight grounds. I freely acknowledge, however, that the evidence of the spuriousness of this celebrated passage, even if it were much less conclusive, than, in my mind, it appears to be, would be quite sufficient to prevent me from resting upon it any part of the weight of this argument."

To the same purpose the bishop of Lincoln, in his Elements of Christian Theology, says, "I must own, that, after an attentive consideration of the controversy relative to that passage, *I am convinced that it is spurious.*"

Professor Stuart undoubtedly holds the same opinion respecting this verse; for, in adducing the texts in favor of the doctrine of the Trinity, he omits all mention of this; whereas, if he thought it genuine, he must have given it a conspicuous place. He probably alludes to it, with others, when he says he shall "select only those texts the language of which appears to be genuine, and above the condemnation of textual criticism."

In this place may be added the fact, that the Great Reformer LUTHER uniformly rejected this verse from his translation of the New Testament. He did not admit it to a place in the edition which was publishing at the time of his death; and "he concluded his preface to that edition," says Charles Butler, "with what may be termed *his dying*

request, that *upon no account his translation should be altered, in the slightest instance;*"* which, of course, implies his firm persuasion that this verse does not belong to the Bible.

To these names, some of them amongst the most honored in the church, might be added many more equally well known; it is enough to mention those eminent biblical critics Simon and Wetstein; Benson, Grotius, and Semler, (who, says Michaelis, "not only confuted all the arguments which had been used in favor of this verse, but wrote the most important work which we have on this subject;") Sir Isaac Newton, Bishop Herbert Marsh, Archbishop Newcome, and the distinguished Methodist Dr. Adam Clarke; and, finally, that illustrious scholar, Porson, whose letters, by which the controversy concerning the verse was brought to a final conclusion, "are an eternal monument of his erudition, critical sagacity, and wit."

To the extracts already made others might be added, if I were in a situation to have access to the necessary books. I have not made them under the idea that you are unacquainted with them, but simply that it might be seen how strong and unqualified is the conviction produced upon the minds of the most competent judges by the evidence against this verse.

Since, however, you have differed from them in your judgment of the case, it is to be presumed that you are possessed of facts or arguments upon the subject which have escaped the research and ingenuity of European learning; or that you have discovered a method of arran-

* I recollect having somewhere read, that Luther made it the subject of *particular request*, that the verse in question might never be inserted in his translation of the New Testament. As, however, I have not the authority by me, I do not mention it with confidence.

ging *their* facts and arguments so as to bring the weight of evidence into the opposite scale. In either case, no one has a right to question your honest conviction. But you must not be surprised if others should have a different persuasion, and should continue to account this passage of no authority, until they are acquainted with, and feel the force of, the reasons which have led you to restore it to its place in the sacred volume. If it *do belong to the volume*, it cannot be for the interest of any one that it should be excluded; * because it is of the utmost importance to us all, of every name, that we should receive THE WHOLE of Scripture without diminution or reserve. And, on the other hand, if it be *not* a part of the records of Christianity, it cannot be for the interest of any one to retain it. The reverence which all profess for the word of life, would prompt every one to strike from its pages the smallest sentence which had crept in and made its home there without authority from God. We should be indignant at the attempt *now* to thrust in even a word, for the support of the most valuable truth of revelation; and how can we more quietly submit to such intrusion, because it has existed for a few hun-

* If any should think it necessary to contend for the genuineness of this verse, under the impression that it is essential to the proof of an essential doctrine, perhaps, after reading the following from Calvin, they will find reason to think otherwise: —

"The expression, '*these three are one*,' does not relate to the *essence*, but to the *agreement* of the persons spoken of. The meaning is, the Father, and his eternal Word and Spirit, harmoniously bear testimony to Christ. Some copies, accordingly, read εἰς ἓν, [i. e., agree in one thing.] But although you read ἓν εἰσιν, [are one,] as it is in other copies, still there is no doubt that the Father, Word, and Spirit, are said to be one, in the same sense as the blood, and water, and spirit, in the verse immediately succeeding." — See *Christ. Disc.*, ubi supra.

dred years? *The truth*, on this subject, *the exact truth*, is the only important consideration, and is equally important to all. The Christian world have heretofore showed a readiness to hear, and be convinced, by fair evidence, however it might interfere with their prejudices. No doubt the same disposition exists still; and if other evidence can be found than has been found, it will be gladly received, and candidly considered.

But until such evidence *is* produced, we must be permitted to believe that the verse was never written by St. John. At present, the evidence of its spuriousness appears to us overwhelming. It is not easy to conceive of a fact, depending upon proof of this kind, susceptible of stronger proof than exists in this case. It has been examined and re-examined, and canvassed and discussed by the partial and the impartial, at different periods and in different countries, with great labor, great learning, and great zeal; and it deserves notice as a remarkable fact in the history of controversies, that this is one of those few points which have been acknowledged on all hands to have been brought to a final decision. Do not, therefore, I entreat you, construe it into any want of respect to yourself, that I protest against its being publicly alleged as part of Scripture. I esteem it a sacred duty to show my supreme regard for the Volume of Divine Truth, by bearing testimony against this manifest addition.

It is only necessary to add, that all the best editions of the New Testament, since the Reformation, have omitted it, or at least have set upon it a mark of suspicion and doubt. Some mark was fixed upon it, in, I believe, all the earliest editions to which it was admitted. If you will look at the first printed English Bibles, you will find the passage either in smaller type or enclosed in brackets. It was so printed

in the edition of 1566. It was not till after that year that it was suffered to stand undistinguished on the page; and by whose authority the distinction was first removed, is not known.

But if it be no part of the genuine Epistle, how, it will naturally be asked, can we account for its ever obtaining a place there?

The answer which is usually given to this question, and which is perfectly simple and satisfactory, I quote almost verbatim, as it is stated by Butler. The mystical interpretation of the *eighth* verse, which some of the fathers adopted, (making "the spirit, the water, and the blood," to stand for the three divine persons,) was frequently inserted in their commentaries, and sometimes *in the margin of their copies.** A transcriber from such copies might easily suppose it to be a verse which had been accidentally omitted, and so introduce it into the text; insensibly it came to be considered as part of the text; at first, it appeared sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, and was inserted sometimes before, and sometimes after, the eighth verse; at length, the dignity of the subject gave it a precedence over the eighth verse; and thus it came to be considered as the seventh verse of the chapter. The eighth century may be considered as the era of its final settlement in the Latin text; from the Latin it was transplanted into

* "There are, at this day, several manuscripts, both Greek and Latin, which have it in the *margin*. And such insertions of explanatory words or phrases from the margin into the text are common in manuscripts. Jerome, in one of his letters, says that an explanatory note, which he himself had made in the margin of his Psalter, had been incorporated by some transcriber into the text. And Dr. Mill points out many similar instances." — Benson's *Dissertation*. See also Porson, *Letter IV.*

the Greek; the first Greek writer by whom it was quoted lived in the fourteenth century.

In this way it is easy to conceive that a marginal note, or interpretation, might gradually creep into the text, just as the small type, and the brackets of the first English editions, were gradually exchanged for a uniformity with the rest of the chapter.

If it were not for the names of high authority which I have been able to show are united in the opinion for which I contend, I should fear that these remarks might be the occasion of again exposing Unitarians to the charge of mutilating the Bible, and striking from it, at will, such passages as do not suit their views. But, as it is a notorious fact that the most strenuous adversaries of the verse are among those who believe in the doctrine it is supposed to maintain, as it is held to be "indisputably spurious" by men who have the confidence and respect of the whole Christian world, the reproach cannot, on this occasion, be uttered; and I could hope that our brethren would do us the justice to believe, that in every instance the reproach is as little deserved as in this. We have no stronger desire than to ascertain *the true text* of the sacred volume, and to have our opinions tried by that. If brought fairly and honorably to the true text, *and the true text only*, we do not fear that they will be found inconsistent with divine truth. I trust we have as much respect for revelation as our brethren; we have, perhaps, less respect for councils, assemblies, and creeds; but it is because we think "THE BIBLE, *the Bible only*, is the religion of Protestants." And when our fellow-Christians will understand us better, and use only scriptural arguments against us, we believe they will think better of us and of our doctrine.

Permit me to indulge the hope, that you will pardon any

inadvertencies which may have escaped me in this letter, and will candidly consider what I have presumed to offer you, and to conclude with subscribing myself,

Respectfully,

And with Christian salutations,

H. W.

New York, *May* 9, 1820.

LETTER II.

Reverend Sir:

The interest which was excited by the sermon upon which I presumed to address you in a former Letter, led me to your church on the evening of the following Sabbath. Of the discourse which I then heard I should say nothing, had you not alluded expressly to the First Congregational Church in this city, and to the ceremony of laying the corner-stone, in which I had had the happiness of taking part. The manner in which you did this appears to justify, and in some degree to call for, a few remarks, which, I hope, may have the effect to remove from your mind some of the misapprehensions under which it seems to labor, or at least to satisfy you that we have not thrown away our regard for the authority of Scripture, our claim to the title of Christian. In doing this, I must again ask your indulgence, and entreat you to lend a candid and patient attention.

Your discourse commenced thus: "John xvii. 3. *And this is life eternal; that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* When this

text was deposited, on the Saturday of the last week, in the corner-stone of the First Congregational Church, now erecting near us, it is probable that those who were concerned in that transaction *did not rightly understand its meaning*." These are nearly your very words; and you added afterward, "that, if they had rightly understood it, they would not have made it, as seemed to be their intention, the corner-stone of their opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity."

Now, I acknowledge I had been in the habit of thinking that these words of our blessed Lord do contain a positive and unanswerable argument against that doctrine. I had never yet seen it answered, nor do I recollect having ever met with what could be called a serious attempt to answer it. Your presumption, therefore, that I did not understand it, was calculated to arrest my most earnest attention, and I listened with eagerness for the exposition which you imagined me to need — not a little curious to discover by what possible method this text could be brought to support the doctrine which you were engaged in defending. I do not know whether I am right in the conjecture; but when, after this introduction, which so excited my expectation, instead of proceeding with the immediate purpose of your discourse, you stopped to prepare the minds of your hearers by reading the articles respecting the Trinity, from three or four established confessions or creeds of different churches, — I confess I could not help suspecting that you felt conscious, like myself, that the declaration of your *text* was too directly contrary to the doctrine of your *sermon*, to be ventured before the congregation without some extraneous support. If I was wrong or uncharitable in this, I beg you to forgive me; and my apology must be, that appearances forced upon me such a judgment.

I could not but feel grateful to you (and I take this opportunity, in my own name and in that of the church to which you alluded, to express the obligation) for admitting that we intend to lay this text — a text of the undisputed Bible — as "THE CORNER-STONE OF OUR OPPOSITION to the doctrine of the Trinity." We have been so accustomed to hear it said that we abandon the Scriptures, and found our religious opinions on reason, in opposition to revelation, that it seems an act of especial kindness in a gentleman of your respectable standing, to allow that the corner-stone of our faith is laid in the words of our Lord himself. We do indeed place that verse at the foundation; it is our joy and pride to rest upon the authoritative language of the Son of God; and we confidently trust that the temple of our religious system, standing upon this, stands upon a foundation that cannot be moved. The tempest of human opposition may beat against it, but it will not fall; "for it is founded upon a rock." Till this text can be set aside — till it can be made, by fair and direct interpretation, to speak a language consistent with the idea that *Jesus, who uttered it*, is the same Being with Him whom he addresses as the ONLY TRUE GOD — we do not fear being found in error, or being cast away by God, though we should be rejected by man.

The manner in which you attempted to explain its consistency is to my mind quite unsatisfactory. If I rightly understood it, it was simply the assertion that Jesus uttered his prayer in his mediatorial capacity, in the *human nature only*, and that his *divine nature* took no part in it. I do not think that this solves the difficulty, because, in the first place, it evidently takes for granted the very thing which is to be proved — that he possessed *two distinct natures*, and could act according to one without the participation of the other; a supposition which is founded altogether *on infer-*

ence from detached passages of the New Testament, and adopted for the sake of reconciling difficulties, and which *never has been*, and *never can be*, proved by the express language of the Scriptures. I know that I speak confidently; but I know, too, that I may challenge the whole world to show that my confidence is unfounded. But, in the next place, even taking your own ground, — admitting the supposition to be correct, — the explanation remains equally unsatisfactory. For, at the time of his speaking these words, his divine nature must either have been *present* or *absent*. If *absent*, it was not Jesus Christ who prayed, for he is "TWO natures in one person *forever*." * But if his divine nature were *present*, then, of course, it joined in the prayer, for *both natures together* constitute him what he is; so that it is necessary that wherever he is spoken of by name, both natures should be included. Besides, it is evident the verse does not assert an opposition or distinction solely between the Father and Jesus Christ, but asserts, if it assert any thing, that the Father, *exclusively of all others*, is the Only True God. Put yourself in place of the apostles with whom he was praying; did they understand him to be praying to the same Being with himself? or to be making an exception in favor of a portion of himself? Or, if he had designed to give them a declaration that he was *not* the only true God, could he have framed in language a sentence that should express it more explicitly? So that, after all attempts to explain this text in consistency with the Trinitarian faith, I solemnly believe it to contain a full and express denial, by our Lord himself, of his equality with the Father.

This is not the only text which we think contains such a denial. Others equally strong are to be found, which

* These are the words of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism.

have equally exercised the ingenuity of Orthodox exposition. I will take the liberty of laying a few of these before you, that you may not only see the "corner-stone," but a few of the other stones of the building, and so judge whether "the Lord have not built the house."

Let me ask your first attention to 1 Cor. viii. 6. "To us there is but ONE GOD — THE FATHER — of whom are all things, and we in him; and ONE LORD — JESUS CHRIST — by whom are all things, and we by him." Are words capable of declaring more explicitly that the Father is the one God, and that Jesus is *not?* It seems to me that such an assertion cannot be made in any words, if these words of Paul did not contain it.

1 Tim. ii. 5 is equally expressive. "There is ONE GOD, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Who is the *one* God of whom Paul speaks here? Is it Jesus? Is not this rather a formal denial of his supreme divinity? There is one God — but Jesus Christ is not he. I beg that the sentence may be weighed, and I believe Paul will be found to have declared the Unitarian's faith.

Take once more the words of our Lord himself. Mark xiii. 32. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, *neither* THE SON, but the Father." Here we are told, almost in so many words, by Jesus himself, that he is not God: — *not even the Son* knoweth when that day shall come; yet if he were God, he must have known it.

The conclusion from these passages is irresistible. And let me ask, are we to be accounted as denying the Word of God, when our faith rests on such explicit, *unanswered* passages? We reasonably ask for *one passage* which shall assert (now that the verse from John's Epistle is satisfac-

torily proved to be no Scripture) that there are three persons in one God, or there are two natures in Jesus Christ, as explicitly as these, which I have quoted, assert that the Father alone is God. I do not know, I cannot conceive, by what method they are to be made consistent with the popular theory. I have never seen them fairly reconciled; I have examined the attempts which have been made to do it, candidly, I trust, and fairly, for I have felt that if on that side lay the truth, it was of immense importance for me to discover it; yet I always have risen from such examination with my faith strengthened rather than shaken. It has appeared to me that these passages were evaded, and not answered; and they have continued to inspire my mind with triumphant confidence in the correctness of the Unitarian sentiment. And I confess to you, that when I see the corner-stone of the truth in which I rejoice, laid in the holy words of our beloved Master himself, and the corner-stone of the opposite system laid in a verse which is found to have been inserted in the Bible without authority, I cannot hesitate to declare my thorough confidence in the divine support and sure triumph of the doctrine I profess, and to feel grateful that I am permitted, however feebly, to bear witness to it in the world.

But the scriptural support of our faith is not confined to the few passages which I have cited above; indeed, it could not be contained within the limits to which I must confine myself. Permit me, however, to add a few more, for the sake of those who have been taught to believe that Unitarianism receives no countenance from revelation; some of whom may, perhaps, be led to think better of those who profess it, when they shall learn that they can, and do, plead *the same Bible* in its defence, which *they* are accustomed to use. Let such ask themselves whether they have

ever stopped to weigh expressions like the following, and have reflected whether they are, or are not, consistent with the doctrine we oppose.

Jesus says, *The Son of himself can do nothing.* Does this imply the possession of infinite, underived power? Is it possible it can be God who speaks thus of himself?

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father. Can we suppose him who used this language, denying that he lives *by himself*, to be the self-existent God, possessed of independent life?

Again. *I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I myself, but he sent me.* Is it God who speaks thus? who says he came not of himself, but was *sent?* Yet if you will read the Gospels attentively, you will find this to be Christ's perpetual language.

He is called, in the Epistles, the *image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature.* Is it possible the apostle would call him the *image* of God, or the *first-born*, if he were himself God? or, as in another place, *the express image* of his person?

Equally decisive, as it appears to us, are all those passages which say that Jesus was *made* Lord and Christ; *made* heir of all things; that authority to execute judgment was *committed* to him; that power was *given* to him. All these expressions, when duly considered, are utterly irreconcilable with the idea that he was possessed of infinite, independent, original power; i. e., that he was God.

Nothing is more frequent than passages of this sort. They occur so frequently as to give a complexion to the whole New Testament. Indeed, our confidence in the opinion we hold on this subject does not rest so much on single detached sentences and insulated expressions, however decisive, as upon the general character and style

running throughout the volume, which we are unable to account for, or comprehend, upon any other supposition. I am so convinced of this, that I can hardly conceive it possible for a man to read the New Testament through, attentively considering what aspect every part bears upon the question of the divine nature, without being convinced that it is impossible the doctrine of the Trinity should be true. The general mode of expression and of thought utterly contradict it; and though some passages might seem to favor it, yet he would think it more probable that he misunderstood these, than that they should contain a doctrine at variance with the general tenor of the Scriptures.

Although I have been able, at this time, to present only a bare sketch of our argument from Scripture, it is yet sufficient to afford some idea of the mode by which we are convinced that the doctrine of the Trinity is contradicted by the express voice of revelation, and, like the word itself,* and the famous text, by which it has been supported, derives its origin from human sources.

Having this firm persuasion that ours is *the faith once delivered to the saints*, we must be permitted, on all proper occasions, *earnestly to contend for it;* especially since we

* The dislike expressed to this word by the reformers Luther and Calvin is well known, but, I am informed by a friend, was not accurately expressed in the note to my former edition. Calvin's language is, "The common prayer, 'Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy upon us,' displeases me, and altogether savors of barbarism." Luther says, "The word *Trinity* is nowhere used by the sacred writers, but is entirely of human invention. Whence it has an exceeding frigid sound, [*omnino frigide sonat,*] and it were much better to call the Almighty *God*, than Trinity." It is said, too, that he erased the prayer, "Holy Trinity, One God, have mercy upon us," from his litany.

find it connected with opinions upon other subjects which appear to be most favorable to genuine Christian holiness, and the excellence of the gospel. I know that this is strenuously denied; and it is, perhaps, to be expected that every denomination of believers should imagine its own peculiar sentiments to be of the best practical tendency, for the simple reason, that it believes them to be *truth*. The real fact probably is, that the most important and powerful principles of virtuous action are common to believers of every name; so that the true question to be decided between them is, Whose peculiarities of sentiment offer least opposition, or afford most assistance, to these fundamental and universally accepted principles? If, indeed, we were justly liable to the charge which you brought against us in nearly the following words, — *It is a notorious fact, that our Socinian brethren* (for so you were pleased to call Unitarians, but unjustly, for they have no right to the name) *are Universalists, who hold that the wicked, and vile, and base, and profligate, and criminal, shall be equal partakers of the happiness of heaven with the saints,* — if this unfounded, this cruel accusation were just, then, indeed, it would be time for us to pause, and reflect upon the moral tendency of our opinions. But I have the happiness to inform you, (and I doubt not that, as a Christian, you will rejoice at the removal of such a reproach from your brethren,) that it is thoroughly false. Our sentiments upon this head have been basely misrepresented to you, and it is to be regretted that you should have thought yourself authorized to repeat so injurious a slander. It is probable, indeed, that the great body of Unitarian Christians would dissent from any description which your church might give of the nature and degree of future punishment; but when you are acquainted with them, you will know that the doctrine of a tremendous retribution, inconceivable and

indescribable, awaiting the wicked in a future world, is a part of their creed, and of their preaching, no less than of your own.

I regret being compelled to add, that there appeared to be other passages in your discourses, beside this, less calculated to throw light upon the subject of your discussion, or to promote a spirit of candid attention to it, than to create prejudice, and make men *afraid* of candidly attending to it. This, however, is not a novel thing, or by any means peculiar to yourself; and I certainly am not disposed to doubt that it results from a strong persuasion, that it is your *duty, by every means*, to render obnoxious, and strive to crush, what you believe to be a fatal error. But it serves to strengthen our conviction, that the real weight of *argument* is on our side; otherwise there would be less anxious effort to enlist the prejudices of men against us. We believe it to be only because such a violent odium has been excited, and industriously maintained, as effectually to forbid an impartial inquiry into our sentiments, that they have not more generally prevailed; and this belief is confirmed by the fact, that wherever Christian communities have been left to themselves, undisturbed by the alarms and outcries of *heresy*, and at liberty quietly to follow the light of the Scriptures, without being led at every step by a creed or a master, *there* these opinions have ceased to excite terror, and have gradually gained ground. It is the fear of this result, unconsciously indulged, perhaps, which can alone account for the perpetual endeavors that are made to render them odious. And the well-grounded fear of this result was strongly expressed in a celebrated Orthodox Magazine, which admitted that the omission to inculcate the points of Orthodox theology for some time, would occasion them to be looked upon with unbelief and aversion. If I mistake not, a similar appre-

hension was expressed in the discourse of which I have been speaking.

It is not surprising, therefore, that our faith should be confirmed, rather than shaken, by the obloquy which is cast upon it. There is but one bad consequence to be apprehended from it; and that is, that it should excite in us feelings of ill-will and uncharitableness; that we should be made to forget the charity *which endureth all things*, and return railing for railing. This would be doing us a serious injury; for the spirit of the gospel is the Christian's most valuable possession. By provoking him to part with it, you rob him of that *which not enriches you, and makes him poor indeed.* I trust that the members of the rising congregation are aware of their exposure to this danger, and will guard themselves against this, the greatest injury that can be done them. At present, they certainly are far from a censorious or retaliating spirit. They have united for the security of their personal religious rights, and of such an administration of the worship and ordinances of the gospel as shall not be inconsistent with their views of divine truth. They wish neither to molest nor to be molested; they have no enmity to any, and they wish well to all.

Their views and feelings, I have reason to think, are fairly represented in the Address which was made at the laying of the corner-stone of their intended church; and as you were pleased to take some interest in that ceremony, I copy it for your perusal.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS:

WE have assembled upon an occasion of no small interest. The erection of a new temple to the honor of Almighty God demands of us the religious acknowledgment of his providence, and earnest supplications for his

blessing. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Confident, therefore, in the uprightness and purity of our intentions, humbly trusting that we sincerely seek his glory in the promotion of that blessed religion which he has so mercifully sent to guide us to eternal salvation, we have come now, under the open eye of Heaven, to consecrate to him the beginning of our labors, and to ask of him their prosperous completion. To him we submit the judgment of our spirits; and, conscious as we are, that the way in which we worship the God of our fathers is by many called heresy, and every where spoken against, it is our consolation and joy to be permitted to appeal to him, and to believe that he who looketh not on the *outward appearance*, but on the *heart*, will approve our purpose, and graciously accept our humble offering. It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; he who judgeth us is the Lord.

As, therefore, the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, — who, when they had built an altar for themselves on the other side of Jordan, were accused by their brethren of revolting from the true worship of God, — answered in that bold appeal, and said, "The Lord, God of Gods — the Lord, God of Gods, he knoweth, and all Israel shall know, if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, that we have built us an altar,"* — so, Christian friends, if any of our brethren should imagine that this, our altar, is erecting in opposition to the truth, or the influence of our common Christianity, let us make the same appeal; not doubting that they will receive it with the same ready candor. For, although we have been led by the dictates of our conscience, and our honest understanding of the Scrip-

* Judges xxii. 22.

tures of truth, to withdraw from their temples, it is *not* in the spirit of rebellion or hostility; though we are about erecting another altar, it is not on the other side of Jordan, and need not destroy their confidence or friendship. We place ourselves under the broad banner of those Protestant principles which are the present glory of Christendom. We claim — and in this land the claim will not be denied us — to have our rights of conscience respected, and to be left accountable to God only; and we trust that we are ready freely and fully to extend to others the invaluable privilege so dear to ourselves.

It is true that we differ in some points, and, as we conceive, in some important points, of religious faith, from many of the disciples of our common Lord. The church has in every age had divisions. It is not strange that finite minds should vary in their judgments respecting infinite things. While we see darkly, it is to be expected that we should see differently; and this difference cannot be sinful, unless it overthrow the foundations of holiness and piety, or occasion the destruction of the spirit of the gospel. It is they who have *not the spirit* of Christ that are none of his. While, therefore, our allegiance to conscience, to truth, and to God, compels us to rear these walls of separate worship, we have unspeakable joy in the belief that the great body of Christians are serving the same universal Sovereign — pursuing the same holy end; and that, when we shall leave this abode of imperfect knowledge for that blessed state in which imperfection shall be done away, then, all, seeing as they are seen, and knowing as they are known, shall unite in one worship, in the one temple of which God himself shall be the light and glory. In that day, when, according to our ascended Savior's prediction, "All shall be one even as he and the Father are one" — in that day, it shall be our

happiness to understand alike the nature of that union of the blessed Jesus with our heavenly Father, concerning which we are now at variance. It is with such feelings and anticipations that we proceed to lay the corner-stone of our religious edifice.

I have now completed the task which I assigned myself. I again beg of you to excuse inadvertencies, and to pardon me if, perchance, any of my language should appear improperly confident or disrespectful. All such, if any such there should seem to be, I regret and disclaim.

I am, respectfully,

And with Christian salutations,

Yours, &c.

NEW YORK, *May* 11, 1820.

NOTE. — An attempt has been made in England to revive the question respecting the text of the three witnesses, since the first publication of these Letters. It may be well, therefore, to add to the list of *Orthodox authorities* against it that of the Quarterly Review, as Orthodox as any. This Journal (January, 1822) contains a learned examination of a work published by the bishop of St. David's, in defence of this spurious passage. A few sentences from this article will show that, in the judgment of these Trinitarian reviewers, the passage is as evidently spurious as before.

They express their "surprise" and "astonishment" that any attempt should be made to defend the verse, and their "pain and grief that recourse should be had to a plan of warfare in which they cannot coöperate."

They confute the bishop's arguments in detail, and on his declaration that there is no doubt left on his mind "that we have in this verse the authentic words of St. John," they remark, *We have the most sincere respect for the bishop of St. David's, but we cannot peruse the declaration without astonishment.*

They add, "The arguments of the learned author are, to our

minds, not at all more convincing than those which had previously been employed in the same cause. If the evidence against the text preponderated before the tract was written, we are quite sure that the scale has not been turned in its favor."

They also remark, very justly, "that whatever censures may be justly due to those who would *reject any text which really forms a portion of the sacred volume*, may, with equal propriety, be directed against those who would *introduce a text which is not proved really to belong to it*."

We trust that this question is forever put to rest. No man, probably, will be found to defend the verse again, who is not capable of thinking it a good argument to say, with the bishop of St. David's, *If the verse has not yet been found in any Greek manuscripts, it may be hereafter!*

A

LETTER

TO

REV. NEHEMIAH ADAMS,

OCCASIONED BY HIS SERMON ENTITLED

"INJURIES DONE TO CHRIST."

LETTER.

SIR:

I HAVE read attentively the affectionate expostulation which you addressed to me and others in a recent sermon at the Essex Street meeting-house. Although not present to hear it, I appreciate the fidelity and kindness which caused you so to care for my and their welfare, as to plead with us, though absent. It is not usual to preach to absent people with the idea of benefiting them; but as you say that you did "feel constrained to make a solemn appeal to" us, we are happy to receive and ponder it in the same spirit of love and candor in which it was addressed to us.

The subject of your discourse, "*Injuries done to Christ*," is one of deepest interest. The treatment which our holy Master receives from any of those whom he came to redeem, is a matter that deeply affects all who are his followers. We cannot look on with indifference when he is despised and rejected. His injuries are ours. But you place *us*, not among his followers, but his persecutors. You rank us with Saul of Tarsus before his conversion. Your whole plea against the injuries done to Christ is an accusation of us Unitarians, as being the most injurious of all men. In this you wrong us. We are not persecutors, but followers of Jesus. Therefore your pathetic expostulations are vain; they are founded on an erroneous assumption, and do not reach us. We see no more reason why you should thus take for granted your own acceptance with Christ, and

then argue with us as injurious and lost, than why we should take for granted that we are accepted, and treat you as the injurious and lost. For, as was long ago said, you seem to forget that you differ from us just as much as we differ from you.

I can easily understand that your feelings are hurt by the prevalence of views so opposite to your own as those which other Christians hold; but then our feelings also are wounded by the views which you hold. Your feelings are hurt, undoubtedly, whenever your favorite opinions are spoken of with harshness; but certainly *our* feelings are no less hurt by the scorn and loathing with which our opinions are sometimes spoken of. It is not in the nature of man, that he should hear reproaches uttered against the truth which is dear to his soul, and remain unmoved. You think that, because your feelings are thus wounded, those of the Savior must be too; but here you seem to be exposed to the remark, "Thou thoughtest me to be altogether such a one as thyself." But, however this may be, since we think it is possible that you may be in error, we cannot allow that your representation does justice to the feelings of that gracious Being. We rather suppose, that, knowing both the infirmity and the honesty of our hearts, knowing, as he does and you do not, our desire to honor and follow him, and our purpose to give ourselves to the truth as we find it by inquiry, — if, after all, we have groped in vain, and are mistaken, he will compassionate us; and instead of being absorbed in the idea of injury done to himself, he will but wait for our freedom from the flesh, to show us, as he showed to Saul, the truth which we have sought, but not found.

Meantime we are grateful for the interest you are pleased to show for our enlightenment. It is but a duty in a Chris-

tian to manifest that interest even towards scoffers. And while the air is full of anathemas, it is especially grateful to catch the sound of something like a gentle entreaty and pitying prayer. I should not, however, trouble you with any remarks on the subject, were it not that your statement of your feelings serves to revive in my bosom the similar feelings, which I have often experienced towards my Calvinistic and Trinitarian brethren. Not of envy, not of bitterness, not prompting to clamor, defamation, and scorn, but feelings of grief, of sad lamentation, prompting to entreaty, and expostulation, and tears. If the walls which separate us could fairly be thrown down, and soul meet soul in naked simplicity, I doubt not that on both sides we should find existing this fraternal solicitude; each would then understand the real state of the other, and exchange forgiveness and blessing.

These feelings being thus revived in my bosom, I cannot refrain from giving them vent; and doubt not that you will receive their expression in the same simplicity and kindness in which you have made your own. Perhaps I may do as much to undeceive you in some particulars, and to enlighten you on others, as you have done to enlighten and undeceive me. For I believe that, in every instance in which you plead with me concerning a wrong done by me to my holy Master, I can present to your notice a similar and equal wrong done on your part either to him personally, or to his ever-blessed Father, or the Holy Spirit of truth. Do not let this expression offend you; — but observe, I pray you, that I but use the privilege, of which you have set me an example, of showing how my own deep convictions and religious sensibilities are affected by the doctrines which you and some other Christians hold. And I am sure that a man of the fairness of mind that you profess will not deny the right

which you yourself have exercised. Indeed, you invite me expressly to this, when you say, "If you have any similar apprehensions in regard to us, and will express them earnestly and kindly, we will love you as our most faithful friends."

I am extremely happy, however, not to be able to begin, as you have done, by likening those who think differently from myself respecting Christ, to Saul the persecutor, and Judas the traitor. As this is a gross injustice on your part, I not only will not in any way imitate it, but am happy to say that there is no ground for it; though I think I *might* find ground for it, if I esteemed my own power of interpreting God's word infallible. But I will do no more than affectionately suggest to you, whether it is fair, ingenuous, just, to place those who profess Christ and preach him, and propose to honor and spread his cause, in the same category with a determined persecutor, and to represent them as exercising toward him more "ignominious treatment" than Judas who betrayed, or the soldiers who mocked him. For this you have done in express terms. You say you have done it with personally kind feelings; and I will not doubt it. There is nothing of the air of a *personal* ill-will in any thing you say. But I assure you that I take it as a personal grievance; and if I should retort upon you in a similar strain, you would perceive that I had reason so to take it. But what would be the use of such retort? You will doubtless see, the moment your attention is directed to the passage, that you have been guilty of an unhappy oversight.

"Men in other days, who had been taught by their religious guides that Christ was an impostor, knew not what they did when they crucified him. Saul of Tarsus

was ignorant in his unbelief. *Would that there were more reason to think that, of some who now reject the deity and atonement of Christ, we ought to say, They know not what they do!*"

As if any thing could be more monstrous than this supposition, that any persons KNOWING that Christ is God should reject him as such, and yet preach his gospel! I am sure that you knew "not what you did" when you penned that sentence. If you had, you would rather have cut off your hand than written it.

From this introduction you proceed to your plea. You urge that we do the "greatest possible injury to Christ, by denying his Godhead and atoning sacrifice."

Even if these be true doctrines, I am not sure that your position is correct. I am not certain that the denial of these two doctrines would be the greatest wound to the "*personal feelings*" of Christ. Does that holy and benevolent Being care more for his own honor in the sight of fallible men, than for the honor of his Father and our Father? than for the salvation of the human family? than for the glory of the divine government throughout eternity? Nay, he has taught us on this point, when he said that the injury of blasphemy against himself should be forgiven, but not that against the spirit of God. So that, even if I hold these doctrines to be true, I should think your proposition wrong.

But are those doctrines true? My dear sir, you know very well that it is possible they may not be; and in that case, all the pathos of your appeal — and it is really pathetic — falls to the ground. I am quite as sure that they are not true as you can be that they are. Instead, therefore, of feeling that I injure, I protest, before God and the universe,

that I HONOR Christ by denying them. In doing so, I follow his command, I comply with his teaching. You say that we reject Christ, and that we do it against light and knowledge — without the excuse of "bigoted Jews, Roman soldiers, and pharisaic zealots." Reject Christ! — I will forgive you this wrong. So long as you suppose it impossible that any should be accepted of God who does not think as you do on these points, so long, of course, you will esteem a rejection of your views to be a rejection of Christ; nay, the worst form of rejection, worse, you say, "than common infidelity;" for that leaves the sinner a hope, but this "shuts the last door upon him." When such things are said by a sane man, in a tone of apparent sincerity and sadness, we can only express our amazement at the extent of human infatuation, and appeal from the fallible judgment which condemns us, to that high tribunal of God which cannot err.

At the same time, let me say, I sympathize with you in those remarks which you make, in deprecation of the bitter language which is sometimes used by those who think your favorite doctrines unscriptural. I agree with you that the religious views of conscientious men ought always to be treated as things sacred, — with seriousness and tenderness. A man's religious faith is his most precious possession, and should be treated as such. I feel for you when you say, —

"Our highest and most sacred religious joys, our richest Christian experience, spring from him whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. To a *spiritual believer* nothing is *so precious as the Savior*. You have no conception of this; but you may know that it is true, from martyrologies, and from the memoirs of

evangelical Christians every where, and in all times. We know that you verily think and feel that you ought to say what you believe (or disbelieve) about Christ, but we *pray you* to consider the *feelings of Christian believers*, and, if possible, spare them the pain of hearing their Redeemer degraded, and his blood of atonement counted an unholy thing. O, think, when you are inclined to write and speak bitter things about Christ's Godhead and atonement, think, as David said, when he was tempted to indiscreet words, 'If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.'" Ps. lxxiii. 15.

This is properly said. I am sorry for whatever occasion you may have had to say it. But, unhappily, men are so taken up with their own views and feelings, that they are too careless of doing justice to others. And I solemnly appeal to you, whether *we* have not cause to make a similar complaint. Have not our feelings been disregarded and outraged? Is not obloquy and derision cast on our most holy faith and dear convictions? We, too, have our "sacred religious joys and Christian experience." We have our worship of the Infinite and Benevolent Father, "whose love and compassion toward us is beyond the highest thought; — our repentance of sin, our hope of pardon, our efforts to overcome evil, our expectations of preserving grace, of peace and support in death," and of a happy immortality in heaven, are all founded in his love and grace. To us, as well as to others, he has sent his Son, Jesus Christ, whom we receive and honor in faith and love, holding it a precious and unspeakable privilege to bear his name and look for his appearing. You have no conception of this, perhaps; for you recognize no experience but your own. You verily think and feel that you ought to

stigmatize all this as infidelity, degrading Christ, doing him a greater injury than Saul or Judas, trusting in our own righteousness, the pride of reason, &c. We have borne much of this; we bear much; our professions are mocked, our opinions ridiculed and nicknamed, and our most sacred and dearest convictions scoffed at. You think you ought to do so, you say; but I pray you consider the feelings of Christian believers, and, if possible, spare them. O, think, when you are inclined to write and speak bitter things, think, as David did, when he was tempted to indiscreet words, "If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children."

You found your plea on the assertion, that "to a spiritual believer in Christ nothing is so precious as the Savior." We found ours on this — that to a true child of God nothing is so dear and precious as the Father. Precious and dear as the Savior is, we dare not say that nothing is so dear, so long as we know that the FATHER *sent* the Son to be the Savior of the world. This Father is all love, as well as power and truth; and no words can utter the fulness of that reverence and affection with which his children would fain regard and serve him. Must it not wound them, think you, to hear any thing that would degrade him from his supremacy? that would cast suspicion on his character? that would detract from the perfect justice, the immaculate purity, the equal and impartial love of the everlasting Father? Yet what are we condemned to hear? That this perfect Being brings men into existence condemned already; under his wrath and curse; incapable of all good, and yet expected to do good; some elected out of the mass and saved; yet to be saved only because an infinite "vicarious sacrifice" has satisfied divine justice; which sacrifice, though infinite, yet saves but a small portion of

the numberless condemned. All this is said of the Father, whom we adore. Can loving children hear this said of a Father, and not feel aggrieved? Could your children hear such things reported of you, and not feel aggrieved? Yet such things do we hear continually of our Father in heaven. We know that you verily think and feel that you ought to say what you believe about God; but we pray you to consider the feelings of his children, and spare them the pain of hearing their Father's character degraded. Think as David did, "If I say, I will speak thus, behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children."

I do, therefore, earnestly expostulate with you and your brethren on this point. "I give utterance to my feelings in a solemn and affectionate appeal." My feelings are wounded in this matter, as you say that yours have been. And I am sure that you cannot look seriously at the subject, in the light in which I have placed it, without perceiving that we have on our part quite as just cause for sadness and complaining as you have on yours. How can it be a greater trial to you to find a Savior "degraded," as you express it, by being placed in a rank below that of Supreme Divinity, than it must be to us to find a Father degraded by being placed, in point of character, below the standard of common equity and morality?

There is another point to which I must give a moment's attention. It is that which stands first in your "solemn and affectionate appeal," and relates to the use which should be made of certain texts of Scripture. You must not be surprised if I say, that I expected something a little different from a scholar, and a man who had once been honored with election to a professor's chair in a distinguished seminary. In your whole discourse, you professedly appeal to

the feelings, and not to argument.* This is very well. But an appeal to feeling on a question of *facts in criticism* is not very well. And consequently you have addressed the prejudices and passions of the uninformed. I think this may be complained of. You say, "In order to disprove these truths, you are *obliged to pronounce many passages of Scripture to be 'interpolated'* and *'spurious texts.'*" Not exactly so. The fact is this;—we find that the learned critics—TRINITARIAN AND ORTHODOX critics, *as you know*—have "pronounced" that certain texts are interpolations, and spurious; and therefore, as honest men, we say they are to be left out of the argument. That is all. I ask you, on your conscience, whether, as honest men, we could quote or obey as Scripture what has been proved to be not Scripture? If we did, should we not be accessory to fraud, imposition, and deception? And are we to be blamed, are we to be flouted at, are we to be cried down before the Christian world, in solemn denunciation and awful tones of warning, because we cling to the true word, and will not allow its corruptions? Sir, we have a right to complain of such treatment. And I confess that I am amazed and grieved beyond expression, at finding a man like you vindicating, as a matter of policy, the upholding of passages as part of the Bible which you know are no part of it. I thank God devoutly that I have too much confidence in his word to believe that it needs the support of such equivocal policy.

I think, also, you must be aware that you give too much the impression that our whole scriptural argument lies

* "It may be said, Why not meet them with argument? This has been done. My wish now is, to *give utterance to my feelings in a solemn and affectionate appeal.*"

"wholly or chiefly" in these passages; whereas, as you well know, this is but a small part of it; it covers a much wider ground; so that, as you are aware, many excellent men, arguing from the English Bible just as it is, have yet maintained the Unitarian doctrine.

Before I close, there is another topic to which I must advert. True to your purpose of addressing only the feelings, you make an appeal on the subject of "*the dreadful consequences hereafter*," which must follow, if we withhold our assent to your Orthodox doctrines. I hardly know how this sort of thing should be received. That it may produce an effect on some minds, is not unlikely, for it is solemn and personal, and some minds are timid. But that in sober earnest a man should write such a passage, and not perceive that there is another side to the subject, which ought to restrain his rash hand, is almost inconceivable. However, you have done it, and I dare say have done it in simplicity and good faith. Let it have its effect. But suffer me, in the same simplicity and good faith, to suggest to you, that if, after all, (which you cannot deny to be possible — which you even intimate to be possible,) you should prove to be wrong, and we to be right, then you have rashly subjected yourself to solemn accountability, by your over confidence and dogmatism, both in the statement of our opinions, and in your treatment of those who dissent.

Let me seriously ask your attention to this; to which I would not have presumed to call it, except it were thus made necessary. The case is this: Two bodies of men, equally sincere in their purposes, have come to different opinions on certain great religious matters. They appear at the judgment-seat. Those who are found to have erred, according to you, are without hope, and are to be cast off from the divine love. About this you express no doubt

whatever. You take it for granted that these wretches will be the Unitarians, and hence your concern and your awful admonition. But suppose it should be otherwise; suppose the Orthodox shall be found to be wrong. Do you not see that, on that supposition, we have as solemn ground for addressing an admonition to you? You have uttered your own condemnation. For where shall you appear at that day, if, as we conscientiously think, the doctrines you love are deeply injurious to God the Father, being misrepresentations of his glorious character, and tending to detract from his glory, and to elevate another above him in the affections of his children? Suppose it should appear that you had all along erred, and by your favorite doctrines, so pertinaciously held, and with such a tone of spiritual superiority, had been injurious to the divine economy of grace. Then, according to the principles of your sermon, none of your sincerity, and hearty devotedness, and strong faith, would avail you; but your mistake would be your everlasting ruin. This is what you say of us; and the saying recoils on yourselves. Blessed be God, we cannot take this view of the divine equity. We believe that God accepts those who love and serve him, notwithstanding they may happen to misunderstand some portions of the mysteries of his kingdom. And I pray that you may have the comfort to see this, before your eyes are opened to it at the last great day.

Allow me to add, in response to your glowing expression of the wish that the Unitarian preachers may become preachers of Calvinism, that *I* could wish no higher or better joy to you in return, than *that you and your brethren may become preachers of Unitarianism.* I have known some who have made the change; — men educated in the bosom of old Puritanism; who drank in her milk from their

boyhood; who preached acceptably and honorably in Orthodox pulpits; who have been led, by the devoted study of the Scriptures, and much thinking and prayer, to leave all that holy body, and devote themselves to what seemed a truer, juster, happier form of Christian doctrine. You would smile at my simplicity if I were to express a hope that *you* might enjoy the same privilege and happiness. Certainly I will not seem to insult you by intimating such a change to be possible. God give you peace and salvation in the service you have chosen! But I do hope, pray, and expect, that others besides those I have named will come to the true light, and preach the supremacy and love of the Father who sent his Son for the salvation of the world. They would "bring the long and painful experience of error to assist them in defending the truth;" and would be "welcomed into the company of the believers and preachers" of the ONE GOD AND THE ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

I subscribe myself your brother in Christ,

A UNITARIAN.

HINTS

ON

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

Maximus vero studiorum fructus est, et velut præmium quoddam amplissimum longi laboris, *ex tempore dicendi facultas.*

QUINCT.

PREFACE.

It is the object of this little work to draw the attention of those who are preparing for the Christian ministry, or who have just entered it, to a mode of preaching which the writer thinks has been too much discountenanced and despised; but which, under proper restrictions, he is persuaded, may add greatly to the opportunities of ministerial usefulness. The subject has hardly received the attention it deserves from writers on the pastoral office, who have usually devoted to it but a few sentences, which offer little encouragement, and afford no aid. Burnet in his Treatise on the Pastoral Care, and Fenelon in his dialogues on Eloquence, have treated it more at large, but still very cursorily. To their arguments and their authority, which are of great weight, I refer the more distinctly here, because I have not quoted them so much at large as I intended when I wrote the beginning of the second chapter. ' Besides these, the remarks of Quinctilian, x. 7, on the subject of speaking ex tempore, which are full of his usual good sense, may be very profitably consulted.

It has been my object to state fully and fairly the advantages which attend this mode of address in the pulpit, and at the same time to guard against the dangers and abuses to which it is confessedly liable. How far I may have succeeded, it is not for me to determine. It would be something to persuade but one to add this to his other talents for doing good in the church. Even the attempt to do it, though unsuccessful, would not be without its reward, since it could not be fairly made without a most salutary moral and intellectual discipline.

It is not to be expected, nor do I mean by any thing I have said to intimate, that every man is capable of becoming an accomplished

preacher in this mode, or that every one may succeed as well in this as in the ordinary mode. There is a variety in the talents of men, and to some this may be peculiarly unsuited. Yet this is no good reason why *any* should decline the attempt, since it is only by making the attempt that they can determine whether or not success is within their power.

There is at least one consequence likely to result from the study of this art and the attempt to practise it, which would alone be a sufficient reason for urging it earnestly. I mean, its probable effect in breaking up the constrained, formal, scholastic mode of address, which follows the student from his college duties, and keeps him from immediate contact with the hearts of his fellow-men. This would be effected by his learning to speak from his feelings, rather than from the critical rules of a book. His address would be more natural, and consequently better adapted to effective preaching.

Boston, *January*, 1824.

To the third edition have been added several notes, and a few paragraphs in the third chapter.

Cambridge, *November*, 1830.

HINTS

ON

EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

CHAPTER I.

ADVANTAGES OF EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING.

It is a little remarkable that, while some classes of Christians do not tolerate the preaching of a written discourse, others have an equal prejudice against all sermons which have not been carefully precomposed. Among the latter are to be found those who favor an educated ministry, and whose preachers are valued for their cultivated minds and extensive knowledge. The former are, for the most part, those who disparage learning as a qualification for a Christian teacher, and whose ministers are consequently not accustomed to exact mental discipline, nor familiar with the best models of thinking and writing. It might seem, at first view, that the least cultivated would require the greatest previous preparation, in order profitably to address their fellow-men, and that the best informed and most accustomed to study might be best trusted to speak without the labor of written composition. That it has been thought otherwise, is probably owing, in a great measure, to the solicitude for literary exactness and

elegance of style, which becomes a habit in the taste of studious men, and renders all inaccuracy and carelessness offensive. He who has been accustomed to read and admire the finest models of composition in various languages, and to dwell on those niceties of method and expression which form so large a part of the charm of literary works, acquires a critical delicacy of taste, which renders him fastidiously sensitive to those crudities and roughnesses of speech which almost necessarily attend an extemporaneous style. He is apt to exaggerate their importance, and to imagine that no excellences of another kind can atone for them. He therefore protects himself by the toil of previous composition, and ventures not a sentence which he has not leisurely weighed and measured. An audience also, composed of reading people, or accustomed to the exactness of written composition in the pulpit, acquires something of the same taste, and is easily offended at the occasional homeliness of diction and looseness of method which occur in extemporaneous speaking; whereas those preachers and hearers, whose education and habits of mind have been different, know nothing of this taste, and are insensible to these blemishes; and, if there be only a fluent outpouring of words, accompanied by a manner which evinces earnestness and sincerity, are pleased and satisfied.

It is further remarkable that this prejudice of taste has been suffered to produce this effect in no profession but that of the ministry. The most fastidious taste never carries a written speech to the bar or into the senate. The very man who dares not ascend the pulpit without a sermon diligently arranged, and filled out to the smallest word, if he had gone into the profession of the law, would, at the same age and with no greater advantages, address the bench and the jury in language altogether unpremeditated. Instances are not

wanting in which the minister, who imagined it impossible to put ten sentences together in the pulpit, has found himself able, on changing his profession, to speak fluently for an hour.

I have no doubt that to speak ex tempore is easier at the bar, and in the legislature, than in the pulpit. Our associations with this place are of so sacred a character, that our faculties do not readily play there with their accustomed freedom. There is an awe upon our feelings which constrains us. A sense, too, of the importance and responsibility of the station, and of the momentous consequences depending on the influence he may there exert, has a tendency to oppress and embarrass the conscientious man, who feels it as he ought. There is also, in the other cases, an immediate end to be attained, which produces a powerful immediate excitement, — an excitement increased by the presence of those who are speaking on the opposite side of the question, and in assailing or answering whom the embarrassment of the place is lost in the interest of the argument; whereas in the pulpit there is none to assault, and none to refute; the preacher has the field entirely to himself, and this is sufficiently dismaying. The ardor and self-oblivion which present debate occasions do not exist; and the solemn stillness and fixed gaze of a waiting multitude serve rather to appal and abash the solitary speaker, than to bring the subject forcibly to his mind, or cause his attention to be absorbed in it. Thus every external circumstance is unpropitious, and it is not strange that relief has been sought in the use of manuscripts.

But still, these difficulties, and others which I shall have occasion to mention in another place, are by no means such as to raise that insuperable obstacle which many suppose. They may all be overcome by resolution and perseverance.

As regards merely the use of unpremeditated language, it is far from being a difficult attainment. A writer, whose opportunities of observation give weight to his opinion, says, in speaking of the style of the younger Pitt, "This profuse and interminable flow of words is not in itself either a rare or remarkable endowment. It is wholly a thing of habit, and is exercised by every village lawyer with various degrees of power and grace." * If there be circumstances which render the habit more difficult to be acquired by the preacher, they are still such as may be surmounted; and it may be made plain, I think, that the advantages which he may thus insure to himself are so many and so great, as to offer the strongest inducement to make the attempt.

That these advantages are real and substantial, may be safely inferred from the habit of public orators in other professions, and from the effects which they are known to produce. There is more natural warmth in the declamation, more earnestness in the address, greater animation in the manner, more of the lighting up of the soul in the countenance and whole mien, more freedom and meaning in the gesture; the eye speaks, and the fingers speak; and when the orator is so excited as to forget every thing but the matter on which his mind and feelings are acting, the whole body is affected, and helps to propagate his emotions to the hearer. Amidst all the exaggerated coloring of Patrick Henry's biographer, there is doubtless enough that is true to prove a power in the spontaneous energy of an excited speaker, superior in its effects to any thing that can be produced by writing. Something of the same sort has been witnessed by every one who is in the habit of attending in the courts of justice, or the chambers of legislation. And

* Europe, &c., by a citizen of the United States.

this not only in the instances of the most highly eloquent, but inferior men are found thus to excite attention and produce effects which they never could have done by their pens. In deliberative assemblies, in senates and parliaments, the larger portion of the speaking is necessarily unpremeditated; perhaps the most eloquent is always so; for it is elicited by the growing heat of debate; it is the spontaneous combustion of the mind in the conflict of opinion. Chatham's speeches were not written, nor those of Fox, nor that of Ames on the British treaty. They were, so far as regards their language and ornaments, the effusions of the moment, and derived from their freshness a power which no study could impart. Among the orations of Cicero, which are said to have made the greatest impression, and to have best accomplished the orator's design, are those delivered on unexpected emergencies, which precluded the possibility of previous preparation. Such were his first invective against Catiline, and the speech which stilled the disturbances at the theatre. In all these cases, there can be no question of the advantage which the orators enjoyed in their ability to make use of the excitement of the occasion, unchilled by the formality of studied preparation. Although possibly guilty of many rhetorical and logical faults, yet these would be unobserved in the fervent and impassioned torrent which bore away the minds of the delighted auditors.

It is doubtless very true that a man of study and reflection, accustomed deliberately to weigh every expression and analyze every sentence, and to be influenced by nothing which does not bear the test of the severest examination, may be most impressed by the quiet, unpretending reading of a well-digested essay or dissertation. To some men the concisest statement of a subject, with nothing to adorn the naked skeleton of thought, is most forcible. They are even

impatient of any attempt to assist its effect by fine writing, by emphasis, tone, or gesture. They are like the mathematician, who read the Paradise Lost without pleasure, because he could not see that it proved any thing. But we are not to judge from the taste of such men of what is suitable to affect the majority. The multitude are not mere thinkers or great readers. From their necessary habits they are incapable of following a long discussion, except it be made inviting by the circumstances attending it, or the manner of conducting it. Their attention must be roused and maintained by some external application. To them

> "Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant
> More learned than their ears."

It is a great fault with intellectual men, that they do not make sufficient allowance for the different modes of education and habits of mind in men of other pursuits. It is one of the infelicities of education at a university, that a man is there trained in a fictitious scene, where there are interests, associations, feelings, exceedingly diverse from what prevail in the society of the world, and where he becomes so far separated from the habits and sympathies of other men, as to need to acquire a new knowledge of them, before he knows how to address them. When a young man leaves the seclusion of a student's life to preach to his fellow-men, he is likely to speak to them as if they were scholars. He imagines them to be capable of appreciating the niceties of method and style, and of being affected by the same sort of sentiment, illustration, and cool remark, which affects those who have been accustomed to be guided by the dumb and lifeless pages of a book. He therefore talks to them calmly, is more anxious for correctness than impression, fears to make more noise or to have more motion than the very letters on his manuscript; addressing himself, as he thinks,

to the intellectual part of man; but he forgets that the intellectual man is not very easy of access, and must be approached through the senses, and affections, and imagination.

There was a class of rhetoricians and orators at Rome in the time of Cicero, who were famous for having made the same mistake. They would do every thing by a fixed and almost mechanical rule, by calculation and measurement. Their sentences were measured, their gestures were measured, their tones were measured; and they framed canons of judgment and taste, by which it was pronounced an affront on the intellectual nature of man to assail him with epithets, and exclamations, and varied tones, and emphatic gesture. They censured the free and flowing manner of Cicero as "tumid and exuberant" — *inflatus et tumens, nec satis pressus, supra modum exultans et superfluens.** They cultivated a more guarded and concise style, which might indeed please the critic or the scholar, but was wholly unfitted to instruct or move a promiscuous audience; as was said of one of them, *Oratio — doctis et attente audientibus erat illustris; a multitudine autem et a foro, cui nata eloquentia est, devorabatur.* The taste of the multitude prevailed, and Cicero was the admiration of the people, while those who pruned themselves by a more rigid and philosophical law,

"Coldly correct and critically dull,"

"were frequently deserted by the audience in the midst of their harangues." †

We may learn something from this. There is one mode of address for books and for classical readers, and another for the mass of men, who judge by the eye and ear, by the fancy and feelings, and know little of rules of art or of an

* Tac. de Oratoribus Dial. c. 18.

† Middleton's Life of Cicero, iii. 324.

educated taste. Hence it is that many of those preachers who have become the classics of a country, have been unattractive to the multitude, who have deserted their polished and careful composition for the more unrestrained and rousing declamation of another class. The singular success of Chalmers seems to be in a considerable measure owing to his attention to this fact. He has abandoned the pure and measured style, and adopted a heterogeneous mixture of the gaudy, pompous, and colloquial, offensive to the ears of literary men, but highly acceptable to those who are less biased by the authority of a standard taste and established models. We need not go to the extreme of Chalmers — for there is no necessity for inaccuracy, bombast, or false taste — but we should doubtless gain by adopting his principle. The object is, to address men according to their actual character, and in that mode in which their habits of mind may render them most accessible. As but few are thinkers or readers, a congregation is not to be addressed as such; but, their modes of life being remembered, constant regard must be had to their need of external attraction. This is most easily done by the familiarity and directness of extemporaneous address; for which reason this mode of preaching has peculiar advantages in its adaptation to their situation and wants.

The truth is, indeed, that it is not the weight of the thought, the profoundness of the argument, the exactness of the arrangement, the choiceness of the language, which interest and chain the attention of even those educated hearers who are able to appreciate them all. They are as likely to sleep through the whole as others. They can find all these qualities in much higher perfection in their libraries; they do not seek these only at church. And as to the large mass of the people, they are to them hidden

things, of which they discern nothing. It is not these so much as the attraction of an earnest manner, which arrests the attention and makes instruction welcome. Every day's observation may show us, that he who has this manner will retain the attention of even an intellectual man with common-place thoughts, while, with a different manner, he would render tedious the most novel and ingenious disquisitions. Let an indifferent reader take into the pulpit a sermon of Barrow or Butler, and all its excellence of argument and eloquence would not save it from being accounted tedious; while an empty declaimer shall collect crowds to hang upon his lips in raptures. And this manner, which is so attractive, is not the studied, artificial enunciation of the rhetorician's school, but the free, flowing, animated utterance, which seems to come from the impulse of the subject; which may be full of faults, yet masters the attention by its nature and sincerity. This is precisely the manner of the extemporaneous speaker — in whom the countenance reflects the emotions of the soul, and the tone of voice is tuned to the feelings of the heart, rising and falling with the subject, as in conversation, without the regular and harmonious modulation of the practised reader.

In making these and similar remarks, it is true that I am thinking of the *best* extemporaneous speakers, and that all cannot be such. But it ought to be recollected at the same time, that all cannot be excellent *readers;* that those who speak ill, would probably read still worse; and that therefore those who can attain to no eminence as speakers, do not on that account fail of the advantages of which I speak, since they escape at least the unnatural monotony of bad reading; than which nothing is more earnestly to be avoided.

Every man utters himself with greater animation and

truer emphasis in speaking than he does, or perhaps can do, in reading. Hence it happens that we can listen longer to a tolerable speaker than to a good reader. There is an undescribable something in the natural tones of him who is expressing earnestly his present thoughts, altogether foreign from the drowsy uniformity of the man that reads. I once heard it well observed, that the least animated mode of communicating thoughts to others is the reading from a book the composition of another; the next in order is the reading one's own composition; the next is delivering one's own composition *memoriter;* and the most animated of all is the uttering one's own thoughts as they rise fresh in his mind. Very few can give the spirit to another's writings which they communicate to their own, or can read their own with the spirit with which they spontaneously express themselves. We have all witnessed this in conversation, when we have listened with interest to long harangues from persons who tire us at once if they begin to read. It is verified at the bar and in the legislature, where orators maintain the unflagging attention of hearers for a long period, when they could not have read the same speech without producing intolerable fatigue. It is equally verified in the history of the pulpit; for those who are accustomed to the reading of sermons are for the most part impatient even of able discourses, when they extend beyond the half hour's length; while very indifferent extemporaneous preachers are listened to with unabated attention for a full hour. In the former case, there is a certain uniformity of tone, and a perpetual recurrence of the same cadences, inseparable from the manner of a reader, from which the speaker remains longer free. This difference is perfectly well understood, and was acted upon by Cecil, whose success as a preacher gives him a right to be heard, when he advised

young preachers to "limit a written sermon to half an hour, and one from notes to forty minutes." * For the same reason, those preachers whose reading comes nearest to speaking, are universally more interesting than others.

Thus it is evident that there is an attractiveness in this mode of preaching which gives it peculiar advantages. He imparts greater interest to what he says, who is governed by the impulse of the moment, than he who speaks by rule. When he feels the subject, his voice and gesture correspond to that feeling, and communicate it to others as it can be done in no other way. Though he possess but indifferent talents, yet if he utter himself with sincerity and feeling, it is far pleasanter than to listen to his cold reading of what he wrote perhaps with little excitement, and delivers with less.

In thus speaking of the interest which attends an extemporaneous delivery, it is not necessary to pursue the subject into a general comparison of the advantages of this mode with those of reading and of reciting from memory. Each has prevailed in different places and at different periods, and each undoubtedly has advantages and disadvantages peculiar to itself. These are well though briefly stated in the excellent article on Elocution in Rees's Cyclopædia, to which it will be sufficient to refer, as worthy attentive perusal. † The question at large I cannot undertake to discuss. If I should, I could hardly hope to satisfy either others or myself. The almost universal custom of reading in this part of the world, where recitation from memory is scarcely known, and extemporaneous speaking is practised by very

* Cecil's Remains — a delightful little book.

† See also Bridge's Christian Ministry, part iv. ch. 5, sec. 2, — a work first published in 1829.

few except the illiterate, forbids any thing like a fair deduction from observation. In order to institute a just comparison, one should have had extensive opportunities of watching the success of each mode, and of knowing the circumstances under which each was tried. For in the inquiry, which is to be preferred in the pulpit, we must consider, not which has most excellences when it is found in perfection, but which has excellences attainable by the largest number of preachers; not which is first in theory or most beautiful as an art, but which has been, and is likely to be, most successful in practice. These are questions not easily answered. Each mode has its advocates and its opponents. In the English church there is nothing but reading, and we hear from every quarter complaints of it. In Scotland, the custom of recitation prevails; but multitudes besides Dr. Campbell * condemn it. In many parts of the continent of Europe, no method is known, but that of a brief preparation and unpremeditated language; but that it should be universally approved by those who use it, is more than we can suppose.

The truth is, that either method may fail in the hands of incompetent or indolent men, and either may be thought to succeed, by those whose taste or prejudices are obstinate in its favor. All that I contend for, in advocating unwritten discourse, is, that this method claims a decided superiority over the others in some of the most important particulars. That the others have their own advantages, I do not deny, nor that this is subject to disadvantages from which they are free. But whatever these may be, I hope to show that they are susceptible of a remedy; that they are not greater than those which attend other modes; that they are balanced

* See his fourth Lecture on Pulpit Eloquence.

by equal advantages; and that, therefore, this art deserves to be cultivated by all who would do their utmost to render their ministry useful. There can be no good reason why the preacher should confine himself to either mode. It might be most beneficial to cultivate and practise all. By this means, he might impart something of the advantages of each to each, and correct the faults of all by mingling them with the excellences of all. He would learn to read with more of the natural accent of the speaker, and to speak with more of the precision of the writer.

The remarks already made have been designed to point out some of the general advantages attending the use of unprepared language. Some others remain to be noticed, which have more particular reference to the preacher individually.

It is no unimportant consideration to a minister of the gospel, that this is a talent held in high estimation among men, and that it gives additional influence to him who possesses it. It is thought to argue capacity and greatness of mind. Fluency of language passes with many, and those not always the vulgar, for affluence of thought; and never to be at a loss for something to say, is supposed to indicate inexhaustible knowledge. It cannot have escaped the observation of any one accustomed to notice the judgments which are passed upon men, how much reputation and consequent influence are acquired by the power of speaking readily and boldly, without any other considerable talent, and with very indifferent acquisitions; and how a man of real talents, learning, and worth, has frequently sunk below his proper level, from a mere awkwardness and embarrassment in speaking without preparation. So that it is not simply superstition which leads so many to refuse the name of preaching to all but extemporaneous harangues; it is in

part owing to the natural propensity there is to admire, as something wonderful and extraordinary, this facility of speech. It is undoubtedly a very erroneous standard of judgment. But a minister of the gospel, whose success in his important calling depends so much on his personal influence, and the estimation in which his gifts are held, can hardly be justified in slighting the cultivation of a talent which may so innocently add to his means of influence.

It must be remembered, also, that occasions will sometimes occur, when the want of this power may expose him to mortification, and deprive him of an opportunity of usefulness. For such emergencies one would choose to be prepared. It may be of consequence that he should express his opinion in an ecclesiastical council, and give reasons for the adoption or rejection of important measures. Possibly he may be only required to state facts which have come to his knowledge. It is very desirable to be able to do this readily, fluently, without embarrassment to himself, and pleasantly to those who hear; and in order to do this, a habit of speaking is necessary. In the course of his ministrations amongst his own people, occasions will arise when an exhortation or address would be seasonable and useful, but when there is no time for written preparation. If, then, he have cultivated the art of extemporaneous speaking, and attained to any degree of facility and confidence in it, he may avail himself of the opportunity to do good, which he must otherwise have passed by unimproved. Funerals and baptisms afford suitable occasions of making good religious impressions. A sudden providence, also, on the very day of the Sabbath, may suggest most valuable topics of reflection and exhortation, lost to him who is confined to what he may have previously written, but choice treasure to him who can venture to speak without writing. If it were only

to avail himself of a few opportunities like these in the course of his life, or to save himself but once the mortification of being silent when he ought to speak, is expected to speak, and would do good by speaking, it would be well worth all the time and pains it might cost to acquire it.

It is a further advantage, not to be forgotten here, that the excitement of speaking in public strikes out new views of a subject, new illustrations, and unthought-of figures and arguments, which perhaps never would have presented themselves to the mind in retirement. "The warmth which animates him," says Fenelon, "gives birth to expressions and figures which he never could have prepared in his study." He who feels himself safe in flying off from the path he has prescribed to himself, without any fear lest he should fail to find his way back, will readily seize upon these, and be astonished at the new light which breaks in upon him as he goes on, and flashes all around him. This is according to the experience of all extemporaneous speakers. "The degree in which," says Thomas Scott,* who practised this method constantly, "after the most careful preparation for the pulpit, new thoughts, new arguments, animated addresses, often flow into my mind, while speaking to a congregation, even on very common subjects, makes me feel as if I was quite another man than when poring over them in my study. There will be inaccuracies; but generally the most striking things in my sermons were unpremeditated."

Then, again, the presence of the audience gives a greater seeming reality to the work; it is less like doing a task, and more like speaking to men, than when one sits coolly writing at his table. Consequently there is likely to be greater plainness and directness in his exhortations, more closeness in his appeals, more of the earnestness of genuine feeling in

* Life, p. 268.

his expostulations. He ventures, in the warmth of the moment, to urge considerations which, perhaps, in the study seemed too familiar, and to employ modes of address which are allowable in personal communion with a friend, but which one hesitates to commit to writing, lest he should infringe the dignity of deliberate composition. This forgetfulness of self, this unconstrained following the impulse of the affections, while he is hurried on by the presence and attention of those whom he hopes to benefit, creates a sympathy between him and his hearers, a direct passage from heart to heart, a mutual understanding of each other, which does more to effect the true object of religious discourse than any thing else can do. The preacher will in this way have the boldness to say many things which ought to be said, but about which, in his study, he would feel reluctant and timid. And granting that he may be led to say some things improperly, yet if his mind be well disciplined and well governed, and his discretion habitual, he will do it exceedingly seldom; while no one, who estimates the object of preaching as highly as he should, will think an occasional false step any objection against that mode which insures, upon the whole, the greatest boldness and earnestness. He will think it a less fault than the tameness and abstractness which are the besetting sins of deliberate composition. At any rate, what method is secure from occasional false steps?

Another consideration, which recommends this method to the attention of preachers, though at the same time it indicates one of its difficulties, is this — that all men, from various causes, constitutional or accidental, are subject to great inequality in the operations of their minds; sometimes laboring with felicity, and sometimes failing. Perhaps this fact is in no men so observable as in preachers, because no others are so much compelled to labor, and exhibit their

labors, at all seasons, favorable and unfavorable. There is a certain quantity of the severest mental toil to be performed every week; and as the mind cannot be always in the same frame, they are constantly presenting proofs of the variation of their powers. An extemporaneous speaker is of course exposed to all this inequality, and must expect to be sometimes mortified by ill success. When the moment of speaking arrives, his mind may be slow and dull, his thoughts sluggish and impeded; he may be exhausted by labor, or suffering from temporary indisposition. He strives in vain to rally his powers, and forces his way, with thorough discomfort and chagrin, to the end of an unprofitable talk. But, then, how many men *write* under the same embarrassments, and are equally dissatisfied; with the additional mortification of having spent a longer time, and of being unable to give their poor preparation the interest of a forcible manner, which the very distress of an extemporaneous effort would have imparted!

But, on the other hand, when his mind is bright and clear, and his animal spirits lively, he will speak much better after merely a suitable premeditation, than he can possibly write. "Every man," says Bishop Burnet, "may thus rise far above what he could ever have attained in any other way." We see proof of this in conversation. When engaged in unrestrained and animated conversation with familiar friends, who is not conscious of having struck out brighter thoughts and happier sayings than he ever put upon paper in the deliberate composition of the closet? It is a common remark concerning many men, that they pray much better than they preach. The reason is, that their sermons are made leisurely and sluggishly, without excitement; but in their public devotions they are strongly engaged, and the mind acts with more concentration and vivacity. The same thing has

been observed in the art of music. "There have been organists, whose abilities in unstudied effusions on their instruments have almost amounted to inspiration, such as Sebastian Bach, Handel, Marchand, Couperin, Kelway, Stanley, Worgan, and Keeble; several of whom played better music ex tempore than they could write with meditation."*

It is upon no different principle that we explain, what all scholars have experienced, that they write best when they write rapidly, from a full and excited mind. One of Roscommon's precepts is, "to write with fury and correct with phlegm." The author of Waverley tells us, "that the works and passages in which he has succeeded have uniformly been written with the greatest rapidity." The same author is understood to have said, that of his principal poems, only one, the Lady of the Lake, was written over a second time, and that this was completed in six weeks. Johnson's best Ramblers and his admirable Rasselas were hurried wet and uncorrected to the press. The celebrated Rockingham Memorial, at the commencement of the late war, is said to have been the hasty composition of a single evening. And it will be found true, I believe, of many of the best sermon writers, that they revolve the subject till their minds are filled and warmed, and then put their discourse upon paper at a single sitting. Now, what is all this but *extemporaneous writing?* and what does it require but a mind equally collected and at ease, equally disciplined by practice, and interested in the subject, to insure equal success in *extemporaneous speaking?* Nay, we might anticipate occasional superior success; since the thoughts sometimes flow, when at the highest and most passionate excitement, too rapidly and profusely for any thing slower than the tongue to afford them vent.

* Rees's Cyclopædia.

There is one more consideration in favor of the practice I recommend, which I think cannot fail to have weight with all who are solicitous to make progress in theological knowledge; namely, that it redeems time for study. The labor of preparing and committing to paper a sermon or two every week, is one which necessarily occupies the principal part of a minister's time and thoughts, and withdraws him from the investigation of many subjects, which, if his mind were more at leisure, it would be his duty and pleasure to pursue. He who *writes* sermons is ready to consider this as the chief object, or perhaps the sole business, of his calling. When not actually engaged in writing, yet the necessity of doing it presses upon his mind, and so binds him as to make him feel as if he were wrong in being employed on any thing else. I speak of the tendency, which certainly is to prevent a man from pursuing, very extensively, any profitable study. But if he have acquired that ready command of thought and language, which will enable him to speak without written preparation, the time and toil of writing are saved, to be devoted to a different mode of study. He may prepare his discourses at intervals of leisure, while walking or riding; and having once arranged the outlines of the subject, and ascertained its principal bearings and applications, the work of preparation is over. The language remains to be suggested at the moment.

I do not mean by this that preparation for the pulpit should ever be made slightly, or esteemed an object of small importance. It doubtless demands, and should receive, the best of a man's talents and labors. What I contend for is, that a habit of mind may be acquired, which shall enable one to make a better and more thorough preparation at less expense of labor and time. He may acquire, by discipline, that ease and promptitude of looking into subjects and

bringing out their prominent features, which shall enable him at a glance, as it were, to seize the points on which he should enlarge.* Some minds are so constituted as "to look a subject into shape" much more readily than others. But the power of doing it is in a great measure mechanical, and depends upon habit. All may acquire it to a certain extent. When the mind works with most concentration, it works at once most quickly and most surely. Now, the act of speaking ex tempore favors this concentration of the powers more than the slower process of leisurely writing — perhaps more than any other operation; consequently, it increases, with practice, the facility of dissecting subjects, and of arranging materials for preaching. In other words, the completeness with which a subject is viewed and its parts arranged, does not depend so much on the time spent upon it, as on the vigor with which the attention is applied to it. That course of study is the best which most favors this vigor of attention; and the habit of extemporaneous speaking is more than any thing favorable to it, from the necessity which it imposes of applying the mind with energy, and thinking promptly.

The great danger in this case would be, that of substituting an easy flow of words for good sense and sober reflection, and becoming satisfied with very superficial

* I would here refer the student to Whately's valuable work, ELEMENTS OF RHETORIC, which has appeared since the first publication of this treatise. "A perfect familiarity," he says, "with the rules laid down in the first part of his work, would be likely to give the extemporaneous orator that habit of *quickly methodizing* his thoughts on a given subject, which is essential (at least where no very long premeditation is allowed) to give to a speech something of the weight of argument and clearness of arrangement which characterize good writing."

thoughts. But this danger is guarded against by the habit of study, and of writing for other purposes. If a man should neglect all mental exertion, except so far as would be required in the meditation of a sermon, it would be ruinous. We witness its disastrous effects in the empty wordiness of many extemporaneous preachers. It is wrong, however, to argue against the practice itself, from their example; for all other modes would be equally condemned, if judged by the ill success of indolent and unfaithful men. The minister must keep himself occupied, — reading, thinking, investigating; thus having his mind always awake and active. This is a far better preparation than the bare writing of sermons, for it exercises the powers more, and keeps them bright. The great master of Roman eloquence thought it essential to the true orator that he should be familiar with all sciences, and have his mind filled with every variety of knowledge. He, therefore, much as he studied his favorite art, yet occupied more time in literature, philosophy, and politics, than in the composition of his speeches. His preparation was less particular than general. So it has been with other eminent speakers. When Sir Samuel Romilly was in full practice in the High Court of Chancery, and at the same time overwhelmed with the pressure of public political concerns, his custom was, to enter the court, to receive there the history of the cause he was to plead, thus to acquaint himself with the circumstances for the first time, and forthwith proceed to argue it. His general preparation and long practice enabled him to do this without failing in justice to his cause. I do not know that in this he was singular. The same sort of preparation would insure success in the pulpit. He who is always thinking, may expend upon each individual effort less time, because he can think at once

fast and well. But he who never thinks, except when attempting to manufacture a sermon, (and it is to be feared there are such men,) must devote a great deal of time to this labor exclusively; and after all, he will not have that wide range of thought or copiousness of illustration, which his office demands, and which study only can give.

In fact, what I have here insisted upon is exemplified in the case of the extemporaneous *writers* whom I have already named. I would only carry their practice a step farther, and devote an hour to a discourse, instead of a day. Not to all discourses; for some ought to be written for the sake of writing, and some demand a sort of investigation, to which the use of the pen is essential. But, then, a very large proportion of the topics on which a minister should preach, have been subjects of his attention a thousand times. He is thoroughly familiar with them; and an hour to arrange his ideas and collect illustrations is abundantly sufficient. The late Thomas Scott is said for years to have prepared his discourses entirely by meditation on the Sunday, and thus to have gained leisure for his extensive studies and great and various labors. This is an extreme on which few have a right to venture, and which should be recommended to none. It shows, however, the power of habit, and the ability of a mind to act promptly and effectually, which is kept upon the alert by constant occupation. He who is always engaged in thinking and studying, will always have thoughts enough for a sermon, and good ones too, which will come at an hour's warning.

The objections which may be made to the practice I have sought to recommend, I must leave to be considered in another place. I am desirous, in concluding this chapter, to add the favorable testimony of a writer, who expressly disapproves the practice in general, but who allows its

excellence when accompanied by that preparation which I would every where imply.

"You are accustomed," says Dinouart,* "to the careful study and imitation of nature. You have used yourself to writing and speaking with care on different subjects, and have well stored your memory by reading. You thus have provided resources for speaking which are always at hand. The best authors and the best thoughts are familiar to you; you can readily quote the Scriptures, you express yourself easily and gracefully, you have a sound and correct judgment on which you can depend, method and precision in the arrangement of proofs; you can readily connect each part by natural transitions, and are able to say all that belongs, and precisely what belongs, to the subject. You may then take only a day, or only an hour, to reflect on your subject, to arrange your topics, to consult your memory, to choose and to prepare your illustrations, — and then appear in public. I am perfectly willing that you should. The common expressions which go to make up the body of the discourse will present themselves spontaneously. Your periods, perhaps, will be less harmonious, your transitions less ingenious; an ill-placed word will sometimes escape you; but all this is pardonable. The animation of your delivery will compensate for these blemishes, and you will be master of your own feelings and those of your hearers. There will, perhaps, be apparent throughout a certain disorder, but it will not prevent your pleasing and affecting me; your action, as well as your words, will appear to me the more natural."

* Sur l'Eloquence du Corps, ou l'Action du Prédicateur.

CHAPTER II.

DISADVANTAGES — OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

AGAINST what has been advanced in the preceding pages many objections will be urged, and the evils of the practice I recommend be declared more than sufficient to counterbalance its advantages. Of these it is necessary that I should now take notice, and obviate them as well as I may.

It should be first of all remarked, that the force of the objections commonly made lies against the exclusive use of extemporaneous preaching, and not against its partial and occasional use. It is of consequence that this should be considered. There can be no doubt that he would preach very wretchedly who should always be haranguing without the corrective discipline of writing. The habit of writing is essential. Many of the objections which are currently made to this mode of address fall to the ground when this statement is made.

Other objections have been founded on the idea that by *extemporaneous* is meant *unpremeditated.* Whereas there is a plain and important distinction between them, the latter word being applied to the thoughts, and the former to the language only. To preach without premeditation is altogether unjustifiable; although there is no doubt that a man of habitual readiness of mind may express himself to great advantage on a subject with which he is familiar, after very little meditation.

Many writers on the art of preaching, as well as on eloquence in general, have given a decided judgment unfavorable to extemporaneous speaking. There can be no fairer way of

answering their objections, than by examining what they have advanced, and opposing their authority by that of equal names on the other side.

Gerard, in his Treatise on the Pastoral Charge, has the following passage on this subject: —

"He will run into trite, common-place topics; his compositions will be loose and unconnected; his language often coarse and confused; and diffidence, or care to recollect his subject, will destroy the management of his voice." At the same time, however, he admits that "it is very proper that a man should be able to preach in this way, when it is necessary; but no man ought always to preach in this way." To which decision I have certainly nothing to object.

Mason, in his Student and Pastor, says to the same effect, that the "inaccuracy of diction, the inelegance, poverty, and lowness of expression, which is commonly observed in ex tempore discourses, will not fail to offend every hearer of good taste."

Dinouart, who is an advocate for recitation from memory, says, that "experience decides against extemporaneous preaching, though there are exceptions; but these are very few; and we must not be led astray by the success of a few first-rate orators."

Hume, in his Essay upon Eloquence, expresses an opinion that the modern deficiency in this art is to be attributed to "that extreme affectation of ex tempore speaking which has led to extreme carelessness of method."

The writer of an article on the Greek Orators, in the Edinburgh Review,* observes, that "among the sources of the corruption of modern eloquence may clearly be distinguished, as the most fruitful, the habit of ex tempore speak-

* No. lxxxi. p. 82.

ing, acquired rapidly by persons who frequent popular assemblies, and, beginning at the wrong end, attempt to speak before they have studied the art of oratory, or even duly stored their minds with the treasures of thought and language, which can only be drawn from assiduous intercourse with the ancient and modern classics."

These are the prominent objections which have been made to the practice in question. Without denying that they have weight, I think it may be made to appear that they have not the unquestionable preponderance which is assumed for them. They will be found, on examination, to be the objections of a cultivated taste, and to be drawn from the examples of undisciplined men, who ought to be left entirely out of the question.

1. The objection most urged is that which relates to style. It is said, the expression will be poor, inelegant, inaccurate, and offensive to hearers of taste.

To those who urge this it may be replied, that the reason why style is an important consideration in the pulpit is, not that the taste of the hearers may be gratified, — for but a small part of any congregation is capable of taking cognizance of this matter, — but solely for the purpose of presenting the speaker's thoughts, reasonings, and expostulations distinctly and forcibly to the minds of his hearers. If this be effected, it is all which can reasonably be demanded. And I ask if it be not notorious, that an earnest and appropriate elocution will give this effect to a poor style, and that poor speaking will take it away from the most exact and emphatic style. Is it not also notorious that the peculiar earnestness of spontaneous speech is, above all others, suited to arrest the attention and engage the feelings of an audience? and that the mere reading of a piece of fine composition, under the notion that careful thought and finished diction are the

only things needful, leaves the majority uninterested in the discourse, and free to think of any thing they please? "It is a poor compliment," says Blair, "that one is an accurate reasoner, if he be not a persuasive speaker also." It is a small matter that the style is poor, so long as it answers the great purpose of instructing and affecting men. So that, as I have more fully shown in a former place, the objection lies on an erroneous foundation.

Besides, if it were not so, it will be found quite as strong against the *writing* of sermons. For how large a proportion of sermon-writers have these same faults of style! what a great want of force, neatness, compactness, is there in the composition of most preachers! what weakness, inelegance, and inconclusiveness! and how small improvement do they make, even after the practice of years! How happens this? It is because they do not make this an object of attention and study; and some might be unable to attain it if they did. But that watchfulness and care which secure a correct and neat style in writing would also secure it in speaking. It does not naturally belong to the one more than to the other, and may be as certainly attained in each by the proper pains. Indeed, so far as my observation has extended, I am not certain there is not as large a proportion of ex tempore speakers, whose diction is exact and unexceptionable, as of writers — always taking into view their education, which equally affects the one and the other. And it is a consideration of great weight, that the faults in question are far less offensive in speakers than in writers.

It is apparent that objectors of this sort are guilty of a double mistake; first, in laying too great stress upon mere defects of style, and then in taking for granted that these are unavoidable. They might as well insist that defects of written style are unavoidable. Whereas they are the con-

sequence of the negligent mode in which the art has been studied, and of its having been given up, for the most part, to ignorant and fanatical pretenders. Let it be diligently cultivated by educated men, and we shall find no more cause to expel it from the pulpit than from the forum or the parliament. "Poverty, inelegance, and poorness of diction," will be no longer so "generally observed," and even hearers of taste will cease to be offended.

2. A want of order, a rambling, unconnected, desultory manner, is commonly objected; as Hume styles it, "extreme carelessness of method;" and this is so often observed, as to be justly an object of dread. But this is occasioned by that indolence and want of discipline to which we have just alluded. It is not a necessary evil. If a man have never studied the art of speaking, nor passed through a course of preparatory discipline, — if he have so rash and unjustifiable a confidence in himself, that he will undertake to speak, without having considered what he shall say, what object he shall aim at, or by what steps he shall attain it, — the inevitable consequence will be confusion, inconclusiveness, and wandering. Who recommends such a course? But he who has first trained himself to the work, and, whenever he would speak, has surveyed his ground, and become familiar with the points to be dwelt upon, and the course of reasoning and track of thought to be followed, will go on from one step to another, in an easy and natural order, and give no occasion to the complaint of confusion or disarrangement.

"Some preachers," says Dinouart, "have the folly to think that they can make sermons impromptu. And what a piece of work they make! They bolt out every thing which comes into their head. They take for granted what ought to be proved, or perhaps they state half the argu-

ment, and forget the rest. Their appearance corresponds to the state of their mind, which is occupied in hunting after some way of finishing the sentence they have begun. They repeat themselves; they wander off in digression. They stand stiff without moving; or if they are of a lively temperament, they are full of the most turbulent action; their eyes and hands are flying about in every direction, and their words choke in their throats. They are like men swimming who have got frightened, and throw about their hands and feet at random, to save themselves from drowning."

There is doubtless great truth in this humorous description. But what is the legitimate inference? That extemporaneous speaking is altogether ridiculous and mischievous? or only that it is an art which requires study and discipline, and which no man should presume to practise until he has fitted himself for it?

3. In the same way I should dispose of the objection, that this habit leads to barrenness in preaching, and the everlasting repetition of the same sentiments and topics. If a man make his facility of speech an excuse for the neglect of study, then doubtless this will be the result. He who cannot resist his indolent propensities, had best avoid this occasion of temptation. He must be able to command himself to think, and industriously prepare himself by meditation, if he would be safe in this hazardous experiment. He who does this, and continues to learn and reflect while he preaches, will be no more empty and monotonous than if he carefully wrote every word.

4. But this temptation to indolence, in the preparation for the desk, is urged as in itself a decisive objection. A man finds, that after a little practice, it is an exceedingly easy thing to fill up his half-hour with declamation which

shall pass off very well: and hence he grows negligent in previous meditation, and insensibly degenerates into an empty exhorter, without choice of language, or variety of ideas. This is undoubtedly the great and alarming danger of this practice. This must be triumphed over, or it is ruinous. We see examples of it wherever we look among those whose preaching is exclusively ex tempore. In these cases, the evil rises to its magnitude in consequence of their total neglect of the pen. The habit of writing a certain proportion of the time would, in some measure, counteract this dangerous tendency.

But it is still insisted that man's natural love of ease is not to be trusted; that he will not long continue the drudgery of writing in part; that when he has once gained confidence to speak without study, he will find it so flattering to his indolence, that he will involuntarily give himself up to it, and relinquish the pen altogether; that consequently there is no security, except in never beginning.

To this it may be replied, that they who have not principle and self-government enough to keep them industrious, will not be kept so by being compelled to write sermons. I think we have abundant proof, that a man may write with as little pains and thinking as he can speak. It by no means follows, that because it is on paper, it is therefore the result of study. And if it be not, it will be greatly inferior, in point of effect, to an unpremeditated declamation; for in the latter case there will probably be at least a temporary excitement of feeling, and consequent vivacity of manner, while in the former the indolence of the writer will be made doubly intolerable by his heaviness in reading.

It cannot be doubted, however, that if any one find his facility of extemporaneous invention likely to prove destructive to his habits of diligent application, it were advisable

that he refrain from the practice. It could not be worth while for him to lose his habits of study and thinking for the sake of an ability to speak, which would avail him but little after his ability to think has been weakened or destroyed.

As for those whose indolence habitually prevails over principle, and who make no preparation for duty, excepting the mechanical one of covering over a certain number of pages, — they have no concern in the ministry, and should be driven to seek some other employment, where their mechanical labor may provide them a livelihood, without injuring their own souls, or those of other men.

If the objection in question be applied to conscientious men, whose hearts are in their profession, and who have a sincere desire to do good, it certainly has very little weight. The minds of such men are kept active with reflection, and stored with knowledge, and warm with religious feeling. They are therefore always ready to speak to the purpose, as well as write to the purpose; and their habitual sense of the importance of their office, and their anxiety to fulfil it in the best manner, will forbid that indolence which is so disastrous. The objection implies that the consequence pointed out is one which cannot be avoided. Experience teaches us the contrary. It is the tendency; but a tendency which may be — for it has been — counteracted. Many have preached in this mode for years, and yet have never relaxed their diligence in study, nor declined in the variety, vigor, and interest of their discourses; sometimes dull, undoubtedly; but this may be said with equal truth of the most faithful and laborious writers.

5. Many suppose that there is a certain natural talent, essential to success in ex tempore speaking, no less than in poetry; and that it is absurd to recommend the art to those

who have not this peculiar talent, and vain for them to attempt its practice.

In regard to that ready flow of words, which seems to be the natural gift of some men, it is of little consequence whether it be really such, or be owing to the education and habits of early life and vain self-confidence. It is certain that diffidence and the want of habit are great hinderances to fluency of speech; and it is equally certain that this natural fluency is a very questionable advantage to him who would be an impressive speaker. It is quite observable that those who at first talk easiest do not always talk best. Their very facility is a snare to them. It serves to keep them content; they make no effort to improve, and are likely to fall into slovenly habits of elocution. So that this unacquired fluency is so far from essential, that it is not even a benefit, and it may be an injury. It keeps from final eminence by the very greatness of its early promise. On the other hand, he who possesses originally no remarkable command of language, and whom an unfortunate bashfulness prevents from well using what he has, is obliged to subject himself to severe discipline, to submit to rules and tasks, to go through a tedious process of training, to acquire by much labor the needful sway over his thoughts and words, so that they shall come at his bidding, and not be driven away by his own diffidence, or the presence of other men. To do all this is a long and disheartening labor. He is exposed to frequent mortifications, and must endure many grievous failures, before he attain that confidence which is indispensable to success. But, then, in this discipline, his powers, mental and moral, are strained up to the highest intenseness of action; after persevering practice, they become habitually subject to his control, and work with a precision, exactness, and energy, which can never

be the possession of him who has depended on his native, undisciplined gift. Of the truth of this, examples are by no means wanting, and I could name, if it were proper, more than one striking instance within my own observation. It was probably this to which Newton referred, when he said, that he never spoke well till he felt that he could not speak at all. Let no one, therefore, think it an obstacle in his way that he has no readiness of words. If he have good sense, and no deficiency of talent, and is willing to labor for this as all great acquisitions must be labored for, he needs not fear but that in time he will attain it.

We must be careful, however, not to mistake the object to be attained. It is not a high rank in oratory, consummate eloquence. If it were, then, indeed, a young man might pause till he had ascertained whether he possessed all those extraordinary endowments of intellect, imagination, sensibility, countenance, voice, and person, which belong to few men in a century, and without which the great orator does not exist. He is one of those splendid formations of Nature which she exhibits but rarely; and it is not necessary to the object of his pursuit that the minister be such. The purposes of his office are less ambitious, — to impart instruction and do good; and it is by no means certain that the greatest eloquence is best adapted to these purposes in the pulpit. But any man, with powers which fit him for the ministry at all, — unless there be a few extraordinary exceptions, — is capable of learning to express himself clearly, correctly, and with method; and this is precisely what is wanted, and no more than this. I do not say eloquently; for, as it is not thought indispensable that every writer of sermons should be eloquent, it cannot be thought essential that every speaker should be so. But the same powers which have enabled him to write, will, with

sufficient discipline, enable him to speak; with every probability that when he comes to speak with the same ease and collectedness, he will do it with a nearer approach to eloquence. Without such discipline he has no right to hope for success; let him not say that success is impossible, until he has submitted to it.

I apprehend that these remarks will be found not only correct in theory, but agreeable to experience. With the exceeding little systematic cultivation of the art which there is amongst us, and no actual instruction, we find that a great majority of the lawyers in our courts, and not a small portion of the members of our legislatures, are able to argue and debate. In some of the most popular and quite numerous religious sects, we find preachers enough, who are able to communicate their thoughts and harangue their congregations, and exert very powerful and permanent influence over large bodies of the people. Some of these are men of as small natural talents and as limited education as any that enter the sacred office. It should seem, therefore, that no one needs to despair.

In the ancient republics of Greece and Rome, this accomplishment was a necessary branch of a finished education. A much smaller proportion of the citizens were educated than amongst us; but of these a much larger number became orators. No man could hope for distinction or influence, and yet slight this art.* The commanders of

* It is often said that extemporaneous speaking is the distinction of modern eloquence. But the whole language of Cicero's rhetorical works, as well as particular terms in common use, and anecdotes recorded of different speakers, prove the contrary; not to mention Quinctilian's express instructions on the subject. Hume, also, tells us from Suidas, that the writing of speeches was unknown until the time of Pericles.

their armies were orators as well as soldiers, and ruled as well by their rhetorical as by their military skill. There was no trusting with them, as with us, to a natural facility, or the acquisition of an accidental fluency by actual practice. But they served an apprenticeship to the art. They passed through a regular course of instruction in schools. They submitted to long and laborious discipline — *infinitus labor et quotidiana meditatio.** They exercised themselves frequently, both before equals and in the presence of teachers, who criticized, reproved, rebuked, excited emulation, and left nothing undone which art and perseverance could accomplish. The greatest orators of antiquity, so far from being favored by natural tendencies, except, indeed, in their high intellectual endowments, had to struggle against natural obstacles; and, instead of growing up spontaneously to their unrivalled eminence, they forced themselves forward by the most discouraging artificial process. Demosthenes combated an impediment in speech and ungainliness of gesture, which at first drove him from the forum in disgrace. Cicero failed at first through weakness of lungs, and an excessive vehemence of manner, which wearied the hearers and defeated his own purpose. These defects were conquered by study and discipline. Cicero exiled himself from home, and, during his absence in various lands, passed not a day without a rhetorical exercise; seeking the masters who were most severe in criticism, as the surest means of leading him to the perfection at which he aimed. Such, too, was the education of their other great men. They were all, according to their ability and station, orators; orators, not by nature or accident, but by education; formed in a strict process of rhetorical training; admired and followed even

* Tac. de Or. Dial. c. 30.

while Demosthenes and Cicero were living, and unknown now only because it is not possible that any but the first should survive the ordeal of ages.

The inference to be drawn from these observations is, that, if so many of those who received an accomplished education became accomplished orators, because to become so was one purpose of their study, then it is in the power of a much larger proportion amongst us to form themselves into creditable and accurate speakers. The inference should not be denied until proved false by experiment. Let this art be made an object of attention, and young men train themselves to it faithfully and long, and if any of competent talents and tolerable science be found at last incapable of expressing themselves in continued and connected discourse, so as to answer the ends of the Christian ministry, then, and not till then, let it be said that a peculiar talent or natural aptitude is requisite, the want of which must render effort vain; then, and not till then, let us acquiesce in this indolent and timorous notion, which contradicts the whole testimony of antiquity, and all the experience of the world. Doubtless, after the most that can be done, there will be found the greatest variety of attainment; "men will differ," as Burnet remarks, "quite as much as in their written compositions;" and some will do but poorly what others will do excellently. But this is likewise true of every other art in which men engage, and not least so of writing sermons; concerning which no one will say, that as poor are not written as it would be possible for any one to speak. In truth, men of small talents and great sluggishness, of a feeble sense of duty and no zeal, will, of course, make poor sermons, by whatever process they may do it, let them write or let them speak. It is doubtful, concerning some, whether they would even steal good ones.

The survey we have now taken renders it evident, that the evils, which are principally objected against as attending this mode of preaching, are not necessary evils, but are owing to insufficient study and preparation before the practice is commenced, and indolence afterward. This is implied in the very expressions of the objectors themselves, who attribute the evil to "beginning at the wrong end, attempting to speak before studying the art of oratory, or even storing the mind with treasures of thought and language." It is, also, implied in this language, that study and preparation are capable of removing the objections. I do not, therefore, advocate the art, without insisting on the necessity of severe discipline and training. No man should be encouraged or permitted to adopt it, who will not take the necessary pains, and proceed with the necessary perseverance.

This should be the more earnestly insisted upon, because it is from our loose and lazy notions on the subject, that eloquence in every department is suffering so much, and that the pulpit especially has become so powerless; where the most important things that receive utterance upon earth are sometimes read like schoolboys' tasks, without even the poor pains to lay emphasis on the right words, and to pause in the right places; and this, because we fancy that, if Nature have not designed us for orators, it is vain to make effort, and if she have, we shall be such without effort. True, that the noble gifts of mind are from nature; but not language, or knowledge, or accent, or tone, or gesture; these are to be learned, and it is with these that the speaker is concerned. These are all matters of acquisition, and of difficult acquisition; possible to be attained, and well worth the exertion that must be made.

The history of the world is full of testimony to prove

how much depends upon industry; not an eminent orator has lived, but is an example of it. Yet, in contradiction to all this, the almost universal feeling appears to be, that industry can effect nothing, that eminence is the result of accident, and that every one must be content to remain just what he may happen to be. Thus multitudes, who come forward as teachers and guides, suffer themselves to be satisfied with the most indifferent attainments and a miserable mediocrity, without so much as inquiring how they might rise higher, much less making any attempt to rise. For any other art they would have served an apprenticeship, and would be ashamed to practise it in public before they had learned it. If any one would sing, he attends a master, and is drilled in the very elementary principles, and only after the most laborious process dares to exercise his voice in public. This he does, though he has scarce any thing to learn but the mechanical execution of what lies in sensible forms before his eye. But the extemporaneous speaker, who is to invent as well as to utter, to carry on an operation of the mind as well as to produce sound, enters upon the work without preparatory discipline, and then wonders that he fails! If he were learning to play on the flute for public exhibition, what hours and days would he spend in giving facility to his fingers, and attaining the power of the sweetest and most impressive execution! If he were devoting himself to the organ, what months and years would he labor, that he might know its compass, and be master of its keys, and be able to draw out, at will, all its various combinations of harmonious sound, and its full richness and delicacy of expression! And yet he will fancy that the grandest, the most various, the most expressive of all instruments, which the infinite Creator has fashioned by the union of an intellectual soul with the powers of speech, may be played upon without

study or practice; he comes to it a mere uninstructed tyro, and thinks to manage all its stops, and command the whole compass of its varied and comprehensive power. He finds himself a bungler in the attempt, is mortified at his failure, and settles it in his mind forever that the attempt is vain.

Success in every art, whatever may be the natural talent, is always the reward of industry and pains. But the instances are many, of men of the finest natural genius, whose beginning has promised much, but who have degenerated wretchedly as they advanced, because they trusted to their gifts, and made no effort to improve. That there have never been other men of equal endowments with Demosthenes and Cicero, none would venture to suppose; but who have so devoted themselves to their art, or become equal in excellence? If those great men had been content, like others, to continue as they began, and had never made their persevering efforts for improvement, what would their countries have benefited from their genius, or the world have known of their fame? They would have been lost in the undistinguished crowd that sunk to oblivion around them. Of how many more will the same remark prove true! What encouragement is thus given to the industrious! With such encouragement, how inexcusable is the negligence which suffers the most interesting and important truths to seem heavy and dull, and fall ineffectual to the ground, through mere sluggishness in their delivery! How unworthy of one who performs the high function of a religious instructor — upon whom depend, in a great measure, the religious knowledge, and devotional sentiment, and final character, of many fellow-beings — to imagine that he can worthily discharge this great concern by occasionally talking for an hour, he knows not how, and in a manner which he has taken no

pains to render correct, impressive, or attractive, and which, simply through want of that command over himself which study would give, is immethodical, verbose, inaccurate, feeble, trifling! It has been said of the good preacher, that "truths divine come mended from his tongue." Alas! they come ruined and worthless from such a man as this. They lose that holy energy by which they are to convert the soul and purify man for heaven, and sink, in interest and efficacy, below the level of those principles which govern the ordinary affairs of this lower world.

CHAPTER III.

RULES.

The observations contained in the preceding chapter make it sufficiently evident, that the art of extemporaneous speaking, however advantageous to the Christian minister, and however possible to be acquired, is yet attended with embarrassments and difficulties, which are to be removed only by long and arduous labor. It is not enough, however, to insist upon the necessity of this discipline. We must know in what it consists, and how it is to be conducted. In completing, therefore, the plan I have proposed to myself, I am now to give a few hints respecting the mode in which the study is to be carried on and obstacles to be surmounted. These hints, gathered partly from experience and partly from observation and books, will be necessarily incomplete, but not, it is hoped, altogether useless to those who are asking some direction.

1. The first thing to be observed is, that the student, who would acquire facility in this art, should bear it constantly in mind, and have regard to it in all his studies, and in his whole mode of study. The reason is very obvious. He that would become eminent in any pursuit must make it the primary and almost exclusive object of his attention. It must never be long absent from his thoughts, and he must be contriving how to promote it, in every thing he undertakes. It is thus that the miser accumulates, by making the most trifling occurrences the occasions of gain; and thus the ambitious man is on the alert to forward his purposes of advancement by little events which another would pass unobserved. So, too, he, the business of whose life is preaching, should be on the watch to render every thing subservient to this end. The inquiry should always be, how he can turn the knowledge he is acquiring, the subject he is studying, this mode of reasoning, this event, this conversation, and the conduct of this or that man, to aid the purposes of religious instruction. He may find an example in the manner in which Pope pursued his favorite study. "From his attention to poetry," says Johnson, "he was never diverted. If conversation offered any thing that could be improved, he committed it to paper; if a thought, or perhaps an expression, more happy than was common, rose to his mind, he was careful to write it; an independent distich was preserved for an opportunity of insertion, and some little fragments have been found containing lines, or parts of lines, to be wrought upon at some other time." By a like habitual and vigilant attention, the preacher will find scarce any thing but may be made to minister to his great design, by either giving rise to some new train of thought, or suggesting an argument, or placing some truth in a new light, or furnishing some useful illustration. Thus none of his reading will be lost; every

poem and play, every treatise on science, and speculation in philosophy, and even every ephemeral tale may be made to give hints toward the better management of sermons, and the more effectual proposing and communicating of truth.

He who proposes to himself the art of extemporaneous speaking, should in like manner have constant regard to this particular object, and make every thing coöperate to form those habits of mind which are essential to it. This may be done, not only without any hinderance to the progress of his other studies, but even so as to promote them. The most important requisites are rapid thinking and ready command of language. By rapid thinking I mean, what has already been spoken of, the power of seizing at once upon the most prominent points of the subject to be discussed, and tracing out, in their proper order, the subordinate thoughts which connect them together. This power depends very much upon habit; a habit more easily acquired by some minds than by others, and by some with great difficulty. But there are few who, should they have a view to the formation of such a habit in all their studies, might not attain it in a degree quite adequate to their purpose. This is much more indisputably true in regard to fluency of language.

Let it, therefore, be a part of his daily care to analyze the subjects which come before him, and to frame sketches of sermons. This will aid him to acquire a facility in laying open, dividing, and arranging topics, and preparing those outlines which he is to take with him into the pulpit. Let him also investigate carefully the method of every author he reads, marking the divisions of his arrangement, and the connection and train of his reasoning. Butler's preface to his Sermons will afford him some fine hints on this way of study. Let this be his habitual mode of reading, so that he

shall as much do this, as receive the meaning of separate sentences, and shall be always able to give a better account of the progress of the argument and the relation of every part to the others and to the whole, than of merely individual passages and separate illustrations. This will infallibly beget a readiness in finding the divisions and boundaries of a subject, which is one important requisite to an easy and successful speaker.

In a similar manner, let him always bear in mind the value of a fluent and correct use of language. Let him not be negligent of this in his conversation; but be careful ever to select the best words, to avoid a slovenly style and drawling utterance, and to aim at neatness, force, and brevity. This may be done without formality, or stiffness, or pedantic affectation; and when settled into a habit, is invaluable.

2. In addition to this general cultivation, there should be frequent exercise of the act of speaking. Practice is essential to perfection in any art, and in none more so than in this. No man reads well, or writes well, except by long practice; and he cannot expect without it to speak well — an operation which is equivalent to the other two united. He may, indeed, get along, as the phrase is, but not so well as he might do and should do. He may not always be able even to get along. He may be as sadly discomfited as a friend of mine, who said that he had made the attempt, and was convinced that for him to speak ex tempore was impossible; he had risen from his study table, and tried to make a speech, proving that virtue is better than vice, but stumbled and failed at the very outset. How could one hope to do better in a first attempt, if he had not considered beforehand what he should say? It were as rational to think he could play on the organ without having learned, or translate from a language he had never studied.

It would not be too much to require of the student, that he should exercise himself every day, once at least, if not oftener, and this on a variety of subjects, and in various ways, that he may attain a facility in every mode. It would be a pleasant interchange of employment to rise from the subject which occupies his thoughts, or from the book which he is reading, and repeat to himself the substance of what he has just perused, with such additions and variations, or criticisms, as may suggest themselves at the moment. There could hardly be a more useful exercise, even if there were no reference to this particular end. How many excellent chapters of valuable authors, how many fine views of important subjects, would be thus impressed upon his mind! and what rich treasures of thought and language would be thus laid up in store! And, according as he should be engaged in a work of reasoning, or description, or exhortation, or narrative, he would be attaining the power of expressing himself readily in each of these various styles. By pursuing this course for two or three years, "a man may render himself such a master in this matter," says Burnet, "that he can never be surprised;" and he adds, that he never knew a man faithfully to pursue the plan of study he proposed, without being successful at last.

3. When, by such a course of study and discipline, he has attained a tolerable fluency of thoughts and words, and a moderate confidence in his own powers, there are several things to be observed in first exercising the gift in public, in order to insure comfort and success.

It is advisable to make the first efforts in some other place than the pulpit. The pulpit, from various causes already alluded to, is the most embarrassing place from which a man can speak. One may utter himself fluently in a spot of less sanctity and dignity, who should be unable to summon

his self-possession or command his thoughts in that desk, which he never names or contemplates but "filled with solemn awe." Let the beginner, therefore, select some other field until he have become accustomed to the exercise, and disciplined to self-command. Let him, in the familiar lectures of the Sunday school, or in classes for the biblical instruction of young people, or in private meetings for social religious worship, when there is less restraint upon his powers, and he is warmed by near contact with those whom he addresses — let him, in such scenes, make the first rude trial of his gifts. Practice there will give him confidence and facility; and he may afterward make the more hazardous and responsible attempt before a Sabbath congregation.

4. It has been generally recommended to beginners, that their first experiments should be hortatory; and, for this end, that after having written the body of the discourse, the application and conclusion should be left to the moment of delivery. Then, it is said, the hearer and speaker having become engaged and warm in the subject, the former will less observe any blemishes and inexactness of language, and the latter will have a freedom and flow of utterance, which he would be less likely to enjoy at an earlier and colder moment; besides that the exhortation is a much easier achievement than the body of the discourse.

It is probable that for some persons this rule may be found best; though, if I were to give one founded on my own experience, it would be directly opposed to it. I should esteem it a much safer and more successful mode, to attempt ex tempore the commencement, than the close of a discourse. The commencement, if the sermon be worth preaching, is laid out in an orderly succession of ideas, which follow one another in a connected train of illustration, or argument, or narrative; and he who is familiar with

the train will find its several steps spontaneously follow one another, and will have no difficulty in clothing them in ready and suitable terms. But the application is a matter which cannot so well be thus arranged, and the parts of which do not so closely adhere to each other. This makes the actual effort of mind at the moment of delivery more severe. And, besides this, it will generally be found more difficult, I apprehend, to change the passive state of mind which exists in reading, for the action and ardor of extemporaneous address, than to start with this activity at the beginning, when the mind, in fact, is already acting under the excitement of a preparation to speak; not to forget, that a young man, who is modest because of his youth as much as he is bold because of his office, is naturally intimidated by the attempt to address with direct exhortation those whom he sees around him so much older than himself, and many of whom he feels to be so much better.

I am persuaded, too, that it is a great mistake to imagine a closing exhortation easier work than the previous management of the discourse. I know nothing which requires more intense thought, more prudent consideration, or more judicious skill, both in ordering the topics and selecting the words. One may, indeed, very easily dash out into exclamations, and make loud appeals to his audience. But to appeal pungently, weightily, effectually, in such words and emphasis that the particular truth or duty shall be driven home and fastened in the mind and conscience — this is an arduous, delicate, anxious duty, which may well task a man's most serious and thoughtful hours of preparation. It is only by giving such preparation that he can hope to make that impression which God will bless; and he that thinks it the easiest of things, and harangues without fore-

thought, must harangue without effect. Is it not probable, that much of the vapid and insignificant verbiage which is poured out at the close of sermons, originates in this notion, that exhortation is a very simple affair, to which any body is equal at any time?

Nevertheless, it must be remembered that minds are differently constituted. Some may find that mode the best for themselves, which to me seems the worst. It remains, therefore, for every one to try himself, and decide, from a proper acquaintance with the operations of his own mind, in what method he shall most probably be successful.

5. It is recommended, by Bishop Burnet and others, that the first attempts be made by short excursions from written discourses; like the young bird that tries its wings by short flights, till it gradually acquires strength and courage to sustain itself longer in the air. This advice is, undoubtedly, judicious. For one may safely trust himself in a few sentences, who would be confounded in the attempt to frame a whole discourse. For this purpose, blanks may be left in writing, where the sentiment is familiar, or only a short illustration is to be introduced. As success in these smaller attempts gives him confidence, he may proceed to larger; till, at length, when his mind is bright, and his feelings engaged, he may quit his manuscript altogether, and present the substance of what he had written, with greater fervor and effect than if he had confined himself to his paper. It was once observed to me by an interesting preacher of the Baptist denomination, that he had found from experience this to be the most advisable and perfect mode, since it combined the advantages of written and extemporaneous composition. By preparing sermons in this way, he said, he had a shelter and security if his mind should be dull at the time of delivery; and if it were active, he was able to

leave what he had written, and obey the ardor of his feelings, and go forth on the impulse of the moment, wherever his spirit might lead him. A similar remark I heard made by a distinguished scholar of the Methodist connection, who urged, what is universally asserted by those who have tried this method with any success, that what has been written is found to be tame and spiritless, in comparison with the animated glow of that which springs from the energy of the moment.

There are some persons, however, who would be embarrassed by an effort to change the operation of the mind from reading to inventing. Such persons may find it best to make their beginning with a whole discourse.

6. In this case, there will be a great advantage in selecting for first efforts expository subjects. To say nothing of the importance and utility of this mode of preaching, which render it desirable that every minister should devote a considerable proportion of his labors to it, it contains great facilities and reliefs for the inexperienced speaker. The close study of a passage of Scripture which is necessary to expounding it, renders it familiar. The exposition is inseparably connected with the text, and necessarily suggested by it. The inferences and practical reflections are, in like manner, naturally and indissolubly associated with the passage. The train of remark is easily preserved, and embarrassment, in a great measure, guarded against, by the circumstance that the order of discourse is spread out in the open Bible, upon which the eyes may rest and by which the thoughts may rally.

7. A similar advantage is gained to the beginner, in discourses of a different character, by a very careful and minute division of the subject. The division should not only be logical and clear, but into parts as numerous as

possible. The great advantage here is, that the partitions being many, the speaker is compelled frequently to return to his minutes. He is thus kept in the track, and prevented from wandering far in needless digressions — that besetting infirmity of unrestrained extemporizers. He also escapes the mortifying consequences of a momentary confusion and cloudiness of mind, by having it in his power to leave an unsatisfactory train at once, before the state of his mind is perceived by the audience, and take up the next topic, where he may recover his self-possession, and proceed without impediment. This is no unimportant consideration. It relieves him from the horror of feeling obliged to go on, while conscious that he is saying nothing to the purpose; and at the same time secures the very essential requisite of right method.

8. The next rule is, that the whole subject, with the order and connection of all its parts, and the entire train of thought, be made thoroughly familiar by previous meditation. The speaker must have the discourse in his mind as one whole, whose various parts are distinctly perceived as other wholes, connected with each other, and contributing to a common end. There must be no uncertainty, when he rises to speak, as to what he is going to say; no mist or darkness over the land he is about to travel; but, conscious of his acquaintance with the ground, he must step forward confidently, not doubting that he shall find the passes of its mountains, and thread the intricacies of its forests, by the paths which he has already trodden. It is an imperfect and partial preparation, in this respect, which so often renders the manner awkward and embarrassed, and the discourse obscure and perplexed. *Nemo potest de ea re, quam non novit, non turpissime dicere.* But, when the preparation is faithful, the speaker feels at home; being under

no anxiety respecting the ideas or the order of their succession, he has the more ready control of his person, his eye, and his hand, and the more fearlessly gives up his mind to its own action, and casts himself upon the current. Uneasiness and constraint are the inevitable attendants of unfaithful preparation, and they are fatal to success.

It is true, that no man can attain the power of self-possession so as to feel at all times equally and entirely at ease. But he may guard against the sorest ills which attend its loss, by always making sure of a train of thought, — being secure that he has ideas, and that they lie in such order as to be found and brought forward in some sort of apparel, even when he has, in some measure, lost the mastery of himself. The richness or meanness of their dress will depend on the humor of the moment. It will vary as much as health and spirits vary, which is more in some men than in others. But the thoughts themselves he may produce, and be certain of saying *what* he intended to say, even when he cannot say it *as* he intended. It must have been observed, by those who are at all in the habit of observation of this kind, that the mind operates in this particular like a machine, which, having been wound up, runs on by its own spontaneous action, until it has gone through its appointed course. Many men have thus continued speaking, in the midst of an embarrassment of mind which rendered them almost unconscious of what they were saying, and incapable of giving an account of it afterward; while yet the unguided, self-moving intellect wrought so well, that the speech was not esteemed unwholesome or defective by the hearers. The experience of this fact has doubtless helped many to believe that they spoke from inspiration. It ought to teach all, that there is no sufficient cause for that excessive apprehension, which so often unmans them, and which,

though it may not stop their mouths, must deprive their address of all grace and beauty, of all ease and force.

9. We may introduce in this place another rule, the observance of which will aid in preventing the ill consequences resulting from the accidental loss of self-possession. The rule is, Utter yourself very slowly and deliberately, with careful pauses. This is, at all times, a great aid to a clear and perspicuous statement. It is essential to the speaker, who would keep the command of himself, and, consequently, of his hearers.

One is very likely, when, in the course of speaking, he has stumbled on an unfortunate expression, or said what he would prefer not to say, or for a moment lost sight of the precise point at which he was aiming, to hurry on with increasing rapidity, as if to get as far as possible from his misfortune, or cause it to be forgotten in the crowd of new words. But instead of thus escaping the evil, he increases it; he entangles himself more and more, and augments the difficulty of recovering his route. The true mode of recovering himself is by increased deliberation. He must pause, and give himself time to think; — *ut tamen deliberare non hæsitare videatur*. He need not be alarmed lest his hearers suspect the difficulty. Most of them are likely to attribute the slowness of his step to any cause rather than the true one. They take it for granted, that he says and does precisely as he intended and wished. They suppose that he is pausing to gather up his strength. It excites their attention. The change of manner is a relief to them. And the probability is, that the speaker not only recovers himself, but that the effort to do it gives a spring to the action of his powers, which enables him to proceed afterward with greater energy.

10. In regard to language, the best rule is, that no prep-

aration be made. There is no convenient and profitable medium between speaking from memory and from immediate suggestion. To mix the two is no aid, but a great hinderance, because it perplexes the mind between the very different operations of memory and invention. To prepare sentences, and parts of sentences, which are to be introduced here and there, and the intervals between them to be filled up in the delivery, is the surest of all ways to produce constraint. It is like the embarrassment of framing verses to prescribed rhymes; as vexatious, and as absurd. To be compelled to shape the course of remark so as to suit a sentence which is by-and-by to come, or to introduce certain expressions which are waiting for their place, is a check to the natural current of thought. The inevitable consequence is constraint and labor, the loss of every thing like easy and flowing utterance, and, perhaps, that worst of confusion which results from a jumble of ill-assorted, disjointed periods. It is unavoidable that the subject should present itself in a little different form and complexion in speaking, from that which it took in meditation; so that the sentences and modes of expression, which agreed very well with the train of remark as it came up in the study, may be wholly unsuited to that which it assumes in the pronunciation.

The extemporaneous speaker should therefore trust himself to the moment for all his language. This is the safe way for his comfort, and the only sure way to make all of a uniform piece. The general rule is certain, though there may be some exceptions. It may be well, for example, to consider what synonymous terms may be employed in recurring to the chief topic, in order to avoid the too frequent reiteration of the same word. This will occasion no embarrassment. He may, also, prepare texts of Scripture to be

introduced in certain parts of the discourse. These, if perfectly committed to memory, and he be not too anxious to make a place for them, will be no encumbrance. When a suitable juncture occurs, they will suggest themselves, just as a suitable epithet suggests itself. But, if he be very solicitous about them, and continually on the watch for an opportunity to introduce them, he will be likely to confuse himself. And it is better to lose the choicest quotation, than suffer constraint and awkwardness from the effort to bring it in. Under the same restrictions he may make ready, pithy remarks, striking and laconic expressions, pointed sayings and aphorisms, the force of which depends on the precise form of the phrase. Let the same rule be observed in regard to such. If they suggest themselves, (which they will do if there be a proper place for them,) let them be welcome. But never let him run the risk of spoiling a whole paragraph in trying to make a place for them.

Many distinguished speakers are said to do more than this, — to write out with care and repeat from memory their more important and persuasive parts; like the *de bene esse's* of Curran, and the splendid passages of many others. This may, undoubtedly, be done to advantage by one who has the command of himself which practice gives, and has learned to pass from memory to invention without tripping. It is a different case from that mixture of the two operations, which is condemned above, and is, in fact, only an extended example of the exceptions made in the last paragraph. With these exceptions, when he undertakes, *bona fide*, an extemporaneous address, he should make no preparation of language. Language is the last thing he should be anxious about. If he have ideas, and be awake, it will come of itself, unbidden and unsought for. The best language flashes upon the

speaker as unexpectedly as upon the hearer. It is the spontaneous gift of the mind, not the extorted boon of a special search. No man who has thoughts, and is interested in them, is at a loss for words — not the most uneducated man; and the words he uses will be according to his education and general habits, not according to the labor of the moment. If he truly feel, and wish to communicate his feelings to those around him, the last thing that will fail will be language; the less he thinks of it and cares for it, the more copiously and richly will it flow from him; and when he has forgotten every thing but his desire to give vent to his emotions, and do good, then will the unconscious torrent pour, as it does at no other season. This entire surrender to the spirit which stirs within, is indeed the real secret of all eloquence. "True eloquence," says Milton, "I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, — when such a man would speak, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places." Rerum enim copia (says the great Roman teacher and example) verborum copiam gignit; et, si est honestas in rebus ipsis de quibus dicitur, existit ex rei natura quidam splendor in verbis. Sit modo is, qui dicet aut scribet, institutus liberaliter educatione doctrinaque puerili, et flagret studio, et a natura adjuvetur, et in universorum generum infinitis disceptationibus exercitatus; ornatissimos scriptores oratoresque ad cognoscendum imitandumque legerit; — næ ille haud sane, quemadmodum verba struat et illuminet, a magistris istis requiret. Ita facile in rerum abundantia ad

orationis ornamenta, sine duce, natura ipsa, si modo est exercitata, labetur.*

11. These remarks lead to another suggestion, which deserves the student's consideration. He should select for this exercise those subjects in which he feels an interest at the time, and in regard to which he desires to engage the interest of others. In order to the best success, extemporaneous efforts should be made in an excited state of mind, when the thoughts are burning and glowing, and long to find vent. There are some topics which do not admit of this excitement. Such should be treated by the pen. When he would speak, he should choose topics on which his own mind is kindling with a feeling which he is earnest to communicate; and the higher the degree to which he has elevated his feelings, the more readily, happily, and powerfully will he pour forth whatever the occasion may demand. There is no style suited to the pulpit, which he will not more effectually command in this state of mind. He will reason more directly, pointedly, and convincingly; he will describe more vividly from the living conceptions of the moment; he will be more earnest in persuasion, more animated in declamation, more urgent in appeals, more terrible in denunciation. Every thing will vanish from before him, but the subject of his attention; and upon this his powers will be concentrated in keen and vigorous action.

If a man would do his best, it must be upon subjects which are at the moment interesting to him. We see it in conversation, where every one is eloquent upon his favorite topics. We see it in deliberative assemblies, where it is those grand questions, which excite an intense interest, and absorb and agitate the mind, that call forth those bursts of elo-

* De Or. iii. 31.

quence by which men are remembered as powerful orators, and that give a voice to men who can speak on no other occasions. Cicero tells us of himself, that the instances in which he was most successful, were those in which he most entirely abandoned himself to the impulses of feeling. Every speaker's experience will bear testimony to the same thing; and thus the saying of Goldsmith proves true, that "to feel one's subject thoroughly, and to speak without fear, are the only rules of eloquence." Let him who would preach successfully remember this. In the choice of subjects for extemporaneous efforts, let him have regard to it, and never encumber himself nor distress his hearers with the attempt to interest them in a subject which excites at the moment only a feeble interest in his own mind.

This rule excludes many topics which it is necessary to introduce into the pulpit — subjects in themselves interesting and important, but which few men can be trusted to treat in unpremeditated language, because they require an exactness of definition, and nice discrimination of phrase, which may be better commanded in the cool leisure of writing than in the prompt and declamatory style of the speaker. The rule, also, forbids the attempt to speak, when ill health, or lowness of spirits, or any accidental cause, renders him incapable of that excitement which is requisite to success. It requires of him to watch over the state of his body — the partial derangement of whose functions so often confuses the mind — that, by preserving a vigorous and animated condition of the corporeal system, he may secure vigor and vivacity of mind. It requires of him, finally, whenever he is about entering upon the work, to use every means, by careful meditation, by calling up the strong motives of his office, by realizing the nature and responsibility of his undertaking, and by earnestly invoking the blessing of

God, to attain that frame of devout engagedness which will dispose him to speak zealously and fearlessly. One who has been particularly successful in extemporaneous efforts, once said to me, "My only rules are to study my subject thoroughly, and seek for feeling on my knees."

12. Another important item in the discipline to be passed through, consists in attaining the habit of self-command. I have already adverted to this point, and noticed the power which the mind possesses of carrying on the premeditated operation, even while the speaker is considerably embarrassed. This is, however, only a reason for not being too much distressed by the feeling when only occasional; it does not imply that it is no evil. It is a most serious evil; of little comparative moment, it may be, when only occasional and transitory, but highly injurious if habitual. It renders the speaker unhappy, and his address ineffective. If perfectly at ease, he would have every thing at command, and be able to pour out his thoughts in lucid order, and with every desirable variety of manner and expression. But when thrown from his self-possession, he can do nothing better than mechanically string together words, while there is no soul in them, because his mental powers are spell-bound and imbecile. He stammers, hesitates, and stumbles; or, at best, talks on without object or aim, as mechanically and unconsciously as an automaton. He has learned little effectually, till he has learned to be collected.

This, therefore, must be a leading object of attention. It will not be attained by men of delicacy and sensibility, except by long and trying practice. It will be the result of much rough experience, and many mortifying failures. And, after all, occasions may occur, when the most experienced will be put off their guard. Still, however, much may be done by the control which a vigorous mind has over

itself, by resolute and persevering determination, by refusing to shrink or give way, and by preferring always the mortification of ill-success to the increased weakness which would grow out of retreating.

There are many considerations besides, which, if kept before the mind, would operate not a little to strengthen its confidence in itself. Let the speaker be sensible that, if self-possessed, he is not likely to fail; that, after faithful study and preparation, there is nothing to stand in his way but his own want of self-command. Let him heat his mind with his subject, endeavor to feel nothing, and care for nothing, but that. Let him consider, that his audience takes for granted that he says nothing but what he designed, and does not notice those slight errors which annoy and mortify him; that, in truth, such errors are of no moment; that he is not speaking for reputation and display, nor for the gratification of others by the exhibition of a rhetorical model, or for the satisfaction of a cultivated taste; but that he is a teacher of virtue, a messenger of Jesus Christ, a speaker in the name of God, whose chosen object it is to lead men above all secondary considerations and worldly attainments, and to create in them a fixed and lasting interest in spiritual and religious concerns; that he himself, therefore, ought to regard other things as of comparatively little consequence while he executes this high function; that the true way to effect the object of his ministry, is, to be filled with that object, and to be conscious of no other desire but to promote it. Let him, in a word, be zealous to do good, to promote religion, to save souls, and little anxious to make what might be called a fine sermon; let him learn to sink every thing in his subject and the purpose it should accomplish — ambitious rather to do good, than to do well; — and he will be, in a great measure, secure from

the loss of self-command and its attendant distress. Not always — for this feeble vessel of the mind seems to be sometimes tossed to and fro, as it were, upon the waves of circumstances, unmanageable by the helm, and disobedient to the wind. Sometimes God seems designedly to show us our weakness, by taking from us the control of our powers, and causing us to be drifted along whither we would not. But under all ordinary occurrences, habitual piety and ministerial zeal will be an ample security. From the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak. The most diffident man in the society of men is known to converse freely and fearlessly when his heart is full, and his passions engaged; and no man is at a loss for words, or confounded by another's presence, who thinks neither of the language, nor the company, but only of the matter which fills him. Let the preacher consider this, and be persuaded of it, — and it will do much to relieve him from the distress which attends the loss of self-possession, which distils in sweat from his forehead, and distorts every feature with agony. It will do much to destroy that incubus which sits upon every faculty of the soul, and palsies every power, and fastens down the helpless sufferer to the very evil from which he strives to flee.

After all, therefore, which can be said, the great essential requisite to effective preaching, in this method, (or indeed in any method,) is a devoted heart. A strong religious sentiment, leading to a fervent zeal for the good of other men, is better than all rules of art; it will give him courage, which no science or practice could impart, and open his lips boldly, when the fear of man would keep them closed. Art may fail him, and all his treasures of knowledge desert him; but if his heart be warm with love, he will "speak right on," aiming at the heart, and reaching the heart, and

satisfied to accomplish the great purpose, whether he be thought to do it tastefully or not.

This is the true spirit of his office, to be cherished and cultivated above all things else, and capable of rendering all its labors comparatively easy. It reminds him that his purpose is not to make profound discussions of theological doctrines, or disquisitions on moral and metaphysical science; but to present such views of the great and acknowledged truths of revelation, with such applications of them to the understanding and conscience, as may affect and reform his hearers. Now, it is not study only, in divinity or in rhetoric, which will enable him to do this. He may reason ingeniously, yet not convincingly; he may declaim eloquently, yet not persuasively. There is an immense, though indescribable difference between the same arguments and truths, as presented by him who earnestly feels and desires to persuade, and by him who designs only a display of intellectual strength, or an exercise of rhetorical skill. In the latter case, the declamation may be splendid, but it will be cold and without expression; lulling the ear, and diverting the fancy, but leaving the feelings untouched. In the other, there is an air of reality and sincerity, which words cannot describe, but which the heart feels, that finds its way to the recesses of the soul, and overcomes by a powerful sympathy. This is a difference which all perceive, and all can account for. The truths of religion are not matters of philosophical speculation, but of experience. The heart and all the spiritual man, and all the interests and feelings of the immortal being, have an intimate concern in them. It is perceived at once whether they are stated by one who has felt them himself, is personally acquainted with their power, is subject to their influence, and speaks from actual experience; or whether they come from

one who knows them only in speculation, has gathered them from books, and thought them out by his own reason, but without any sense of their spiritual operation.

But who does not know how much easier it is to declare what has come to our knowledge from our own experience, than what we have gathered coldly, at second hand, from that of others! — how much easier it is to describe feelings we have ourselves had, and pleasures we have ourselves enjoyed, than to fashion a description of what others have told us! — how much more freely and convincingly we can speak of happiness we have known, than of that to which we are strangers! We see, then, how much is lost to the speaker by coldness or ignorance in the exercises of personal religion. How can he effectually represent the joys of a religious mind, who has never known what it is to feel them? How can he effectually aid the contrite, the desponding, the distrustful, the tempted, who has never himself passed through the same fears and sorrows? Or how can he paint, in the warm colors of truth, religious exercises and spiritual desires, who is personally a stranger to them? Alas! he cannot at all come in contact with those souls which stand most in need of his sympathy and aid. But if he have cherished in himself, fondly and habitually, the affections he would excite in others, if he have combated temptation, and practised self-denial, and been instant in prayer, and tasted the joy and peace of a tried faith and hope, — then he may communicate directly with the hearts of his fellow-men, and win them over to that which he so feelingly describes. If his spirit be always warm and stirring with these pure and kind emotions, and anxious to impart the means of his own felicity to others, how easily and freely will he pour himself forth! and how little will he think of the embarrassments of the presence of

mortal man, while he is conscious only of laboring for the glory of the ever-present God!

This, then, is the one thing essential to be attained and cherished by the Christian preacher. With this he must begin, and with this he must go on to the end. Then he never can greatly fail; for he will FEEL HIS SUBJECT THOROUGHLY, AND SPEAK WITHOUT FEAR.

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